

# *The* CHANGING SCENE

*By the same Author*

DEAD 'CENTRE  
TWO OF A KIND,  
AT SEA  
ABOUT LEVY  
PIE IN THE SKY  
ETC.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

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THE  
CHANGING  
SCENE



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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED  
TO  
THOSE WHO PREFER TO UNDERSTAND  
THE SOCIETY IN WHICH THEY LIVE



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Spirit of Two Ages	9
II. Propaganda	28
III. Drama	47
IV. Films	69
V. Broadcasting	83
VI. Fiction	105
VII. The Press	121
VIII. Education	143
IX. Votes for Women	165
X. The Social Sense	180
XI. The Test of Practice	200
XII. The Condition of Labour	224
XIII. Food, Clothing, Lodging	244
XIV. Epilogue	261
Index	265

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## CHAPTER I

### *The Spirit of Two Ages*

IN THE position of England to-day and twenty-five years ago, there are many similarities, superficial and profound. But the spirit of the English people is very different. We are liable to reconstruct past events in the light of those which came after. We see in the events preceding the Great War a clear procession of crises leading to the final outbreak: we attribute the clairvoyance of the post-war years to those preceding and we imagine that an event which shattered the Western world must have been apprehended by those humble people who gave their lives so gallantly and with such apparent futility.

That is our first mistake. To-day, the threat of war is always over us. The papers are full of recipes of peace and preparations for war. Militarists, pacifists, and even those who want peace too much to be pacifists are conscious of the possibility and the imminence of war.

Here is the first contrast. That to-day we live under the shadow of war. In 1912, the man in the street, and by the man in the street I mean the man whose interest in public affairs goes no further than to record his vote under the impulse of election scares, the man in the street did not regard war as a near or likely thing. Even if he was interested in politics, he was much more concerned with the domestic issues of the day, with Ireland, the rise of the Labour Movement, the Suffrage question, the Parliament Act. If he was a Unionist, he was disheartened. He saw his party broken and

beaten in General Election after General Election, despite the partisanship of the House of Lords. He witnessed with dismay the growing strength of the working class, the first effects of popular education, which he feared were going to be carried to lengths undreamed of. To many Unionists it seemed that the party was shattered: and that power had passed permanently into the hands of the Liberal and Labour Parties. And they began seriously to criticise the behaviour of their own class. Earl Winterton, for example, then a bright Tory spark,<sup>1</sup> attributed the decline of the power of the landed gentry not to heavy taxation, but to the fact that the landed gentry had ceased to live on the land.<sup>2</sup> They had gone to town, not driven as country labourers to seek a living there, but to enjoy themselves. They had abdicated from the responsibilities which their ownership had placed on them, but were clinging on to the privileges. They were like directors of companies, drawing fees but not attending board meetings. The Backwoodsmen might flock up to the Upper House. But it began to look as if the people had begun to think for itself and what it thought wasn't going to be pleasant to the privileged classes.

On the other hand, if you were a progressive, things appeared rosy. Admittedly there were questions into

<sup>1</sup> In *Pre-War*, Earl Winterton relates the following jape, which was played on a holiday in Holland with some English officers. "At the last station before we reached Ijmuiden, one of the officers, as the train slowly steamed out of the station, snatched off the cap of the stationmaster, a most resplendent individual, and afterwards, just as the train had reached the end of the platform, threw it back to him, shouting 'Catchee capee.' The stationmaster, who seemed to be a humourless Dutchman, was very annoyed."

<sup>2</sup> George Wyndham "says he can't afford to live in his house and do his duty as a country gentleman; yet he spends far more in giving lunches at the Ritz, dinners at Claridges and suppers at the Carlton than it would cost to keep his country home open through the year. Though he thinks he is a valuable member of the Conservative Party, he is really, by overthrowing the tradition of his class, helping the Radicals to destroy the English land system." *Op. cit.*

which you didn't go too closely. For example, Morley's conduct as Secretary for India. You ignored the fact that the soft-spoken and enlightened liberal proved more tyrannous than the professed imperialist. You ignored the question of Egyptian independence. You ignored the treatment of the suffragettes. All those things were a pity. But they couldn't be helped. At any rate for the moment. England was busy, going forward with a programme of social reform which was a pattern to the world. And the Liberal Government was proud, and justly proud, of the fact that it was carrying through widespread measures for social improvement, despite the fact that the improvements it was making were already long overdue. It was possible in those days to be a progressive without being in a minority.

Of course, the Liberal Government, even the Labour contingent, now appears very moderate. Those measures, of which it was prophesied that they would bring ruin on society, are now accepted by everyone but Colonel Blimp: and the only fault to be found is that they did not go far enough. The majority of doctors, for example, would welcome an extension of that scheme for National Health Insurance which they resisted so strongly at the outset. And even the present Government has to concede in principle the extension of educational facilities, though with characteristic strategy they have succeeded in nullifying the education bill, which was one of the borrowed planks of their electoral platform.

Even while the reactionaries were inveighing against the liberals, as extremists, the more clear-sighted progressives saw that in the Liberal Government there were elements of danger. Both in imperial and foreign affairs,

there was little distinction between Liberal and Unionist. Grey, in fact, makes a strong point of the fact that his foreign policy was identical with that of his Unionist predecessors. In the matter of women's suffrage, Asquith manœuvred himself into an untenable position. It was clear to the socialist of the time that while the Coalition might be trusted to put through important social legislation, it was bound to adhere to the capitalist system. If, as he believed, the faults were inherent in the system, the Liberal Government would be incapable of dealing with them. The hope of the socialist lay in the future of the trade unions, which were beginning to feel their power, and in the Labour Party, which was gaining in political strength.

On the other hand, the Labour leaders who had filled the capitalists with a healthy fear, proved on acquaintance to be less sinister. Their sincerity was usually unable to stand up to the cynicism of professional politics. The very qualities that had made them rise above their fellows, made them peculiarly susceptible to their superiors in education and social grace. These redoubtable revolutionaries turned out to be in fact snobs and social climbers, dazzled with their own success and yet flattered by the recognition of those very people whose interests they had been appointed to oppose. Coming from a class in which opposition is loud-spoken, they found it inconceivable that these charming toffs invited them to their houses, laughed and joked with them and put them on to good tips on the Stock Exchange for any other reason than pure friendship. And anyway, supposing that they suffered any twinges of conscience, their self-interest and the unfamiliar tradition of the House persuaded them that they were not in fact



turning traitor to their electors, but behaving like good Parliamentarians.

But these fears and anxieties were not general. They were confined to minority groups. The general state of the country was one of confidence. The Government was trusted, because it was going ahead.

To-day the opposite is true. The National Government was elected on fear and it rules by fear. Its propaganda is directed not to prove so much that what it has done or is going to do is good, but that what any other Government would do would be worse. Whereas the people in 1912 felt that they were living in an age of expansion and development, the people in 1937 feel that they are living in a continual state of emergency. This sense of emergency, which has been fostered even more at the last two elections than at those previous, has been deliberately exploited. In 1931 a Labour Government was overthrown on the question of devaluation. The 'National' Government was formed, pledged not to go off the gold standard. A gigantic majority was gained, and a few weeks later, at the cost of several millions more pounds, the very people who had prophesied ruin if we departed from gold, went off the gold standard. In the 1936 Election, strategically held so that the Government's policy with regard to Abyssinia could not be tested, a further majority was secured. The Government immediately went back on its pledges and tried to foist the Hoare-Laval Plan on the League of Nations and Abyssinia. When this failed, the Government withdrew from leadership of the League, observing that they would stand by the united decision of the League.

If we wish to find a parallel for the psychology of

modern England, we shall find it in 1914-18 rather than in the years preceding the War. In every way that is possible the Government is cultivating in a time of peace a state of mind suitable only in time of war. Newspapers, news films, speeches are filled with prophecies, scares and reassurances. And in the interests of one party, the nation is called upon to sink its differences, to turn from contemplation of the existent hardship and injustice within the country towards a greater, but as yet non-existent, evil outside. It is the old trick of saying suddenly "Look over there," and landing your opponent one on the jaw as he turns away.

The social record of the Nationalist Government offers a similar contrast with that of the Liberal Government under Asquith. To the Liberal Government, social reform was an end in itself. It was considered sufficient excuse for legislation that it should be designed to improve the material, physical and mental condition of the nation. It was a time of confident prosperity among the propertied classes: and certain members of these classes felt that the inequality existing between the rich and poor should be lessened. So did the poor.

To-day, in spite of repeated evidence produced by the medical profession, the Government took no notice of the fact that at least a third of the population of this country was underfed. Took no notice, that is until they discovered that of the men who volunteered to fight in the Army a large proportion were physically unfit.

We can observe here a change in attitude during the last twenty-five years. The party which, under the pressure of fear, has been elected by an overwhelming majority is not interested in the health of the nation

as a thing in itself. Nor is it interested in healthy men and women, as the producers of marketable goods. The Roman Cato said that it was cheaper to underfeed slaves and work them to an early death than pay more for their upkeep and keep them longer. Perhaps he was right, at least if one has no regard for human life. Yet it is interesting that even on the crudest plane, that of defence, the Government is compelled to do something. The men whose health was a matter of indifference so long as they were unemployed or part-employed citizens of Great Britain is now of supreme importance when there is the prospect of their being used as cannon fodder. And it is interesting to see the way the Government sets out to remedy this evil. The health of the nation is being affected by lack of food. And as a cure for empty bellies, the Government recommends physical jerks. There is food; according to capitalist economists, too much food. To maintain its price, it is dumped in the sea, burnt and otherwise destroyed. But rather than face the problems of distribution, involved by scarcity in time of plenty, the Government recommends physical jerks. And knowing that's not enough, they accept C3 men for clerical positions. Unfit men, says a newspaper, get their chance. Of what? Of health? Or of death?

It is said a nation gets the Government it deserves. And I think that is true. Democracy, as it is known in England, is incapable of giving the majority of people the Government it wants or the Government it needs. If a person really cares whether he is swindled or not, he will not be swindled. No amount of ballyhoo will beguile a nation which is not prepared to be ballyhoo-ed. And so we can find in a popularly elected government

the expression, not necessarily of a nation's will, because it may be of a nation's lack of will, but of their state of mind.

Before the War, the English were mostly optimists. The straight and upward path of progress did not seem an absurdity. Science and art and social welfare were vigorous. In the first year of the reign of George V *Georgian Verse* was published. A reviewer, who later became embittered with the experience of the War, wrote of it: "This collection is like a big breath taken when we are waking up after a night of hopeless dreams. The nihilists, the intellectual, hopeless people—Ibsen, Flaubert, Thomas Hardy—represent the dream we are waking from. It was a dream of demolition. Nothing was, but was nothing. Everything was taken from us. And now our lungs are full of new air, and our eyes see it is morning, but we have not forgotten the terror of the night. We dreamed we were falling through space into nothingness, and the anguish leaves us rather eager.

"But we are awake again, our lungs are full of new air, our eyes of morning. The first song is nearly a cry, fear and pain of remembrance sharpening away the pure music. And that is this book."

That, of course, is D. H. Lawrence as a very young man. It is a very subjective piece of writing. It proves nothing, you'll say. But though the writing is very subjective, it fairly represents the feelings of the Georgian Poets: and it is inconceivable that such a passage should be written by a young poet about young poets of to-day.

"The great liberation," Lawrence wrote further on, "gives us an overwhelming sense of joy, *joie d'être, joie de*

*vivre*. This sense of exceeding keen relish and appreciation of life makes romance. I think I could say every poem in the book is romantic, tinged with a love of the marvellous, a joy of natural things, as if the poet were a child for the first time on the seashore, finding treasures."

Compare with that the tone of the first number of *New Verse*, published January, 1933. "The object of *New Verse* needs expansion in no complex or tiring manifesto. Poets in this country and during this period of the victory of the masses, aristocratic and bourgeois as much as proletarian, which have captured the instruments of access to the public and use them to convey their own once timid and silent vulgarity, vulgarising all the arts, are allowed no longer period means of communicating their poems."

It is interesting to notice the terminology and grammar of the second sentence. Masses, bourgeois, proletarian, Marxist terms borrowed and distorted. The confusion of thought: are the masses (who are 'neuter') identical with 'the public'? If so, why does the author not say 'to themselves'? Have the masses "captured the instruments of access" to themselves? Are, in fact, Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere 'the masses'? Notice the separation of the subject of the sentence from its verb by forty-six words, two prepositional clauses, two relative and one participial clause. Notice, furthermore, the number of things attacked in a single sentence: the country as a whole, all classes in the country (resurrected again to be patted on the back under the title of 'the public'), and finally the Press. Notice, lastly, the pomposity of "are allowed no longer period means of communicating their poems," a "complex

and tiring" way of saying that poets can't get their poems published.

I have chosen this particular example because it gives the weakness of modern thinking. The quotation from Lawrence has its faults, too easy an enthusiasm, the projection of a personal experience into a general context. Lawrence's dream, for example, has little to do with Georgian poetry. He has over-simplified things, by ignoring certain facts. But whatever its faults, it proceeds from a positive emotion. There is an easy relationship with the reader: despite the contradictions in the writing, the author makes himself clear at each stage.

The quotation from *New Verse* on the other hand is obscure. It attempts to use scientific language and misuses it. It holds a threat over the head of the reader, either you agree with this or you are one of 'the masses'; and don't think just because you went to Eton that whatever happens you can't be one of 'the masses.' It proceeds from negative emotions. The editor does not use his space to assure his readers that, owing to the stupidity of other editors, he has secured the services of a number of good poets. Not a bit. He spends his time abusing the very people who gave him the opportunity of doing this valuable work.

I should not have spent so long in comparing the spirit of these two quotations, if I did not think that this comparison extended beyond the parish of poetry. Manners, habits and customs have been revolutionised in the last quarter of a century, partly as a result of pre-war, but even more as a result of war, post-war and post-depression influences. Economic and psychological forces are interacting: and so with the breaking down

## THE SPIRIT OF TWO AGES

of capitalism is produced a series of new types of individuals.' Or to put it in a slightly different way, while human nature in abstraction remains fundamentally the same, obeying the same laws and craving the same things, as economic possibilities change, so the ways in which fundamental tendencies find expression change correspondingly. The suffragette, who found in militancy an emotional outlet which developed her brain and character, would no longer find this satisfaction merely in the exercise of her vote. To-day you may see her selling not *Votes for Women* but the *Daily Worker* at the street corner. Or, again, the man who in time of prosperity turned to religion, may in a time of economic stress devote his energy to material problems. Dick Sheppard is an example. But the reader himself is probably able to supply all the examples he wants, by reflecting on the way his own interests and those of his friends have changed from time to time.

Everybody is conscious of attractions towards certain things or people, repulsions from others. Imagine these stimuli repeated over and over again and you have some idea of the way in which group feelings are formed. Before the War, the majority of stimuli were reassuring, and the prevalent mood one of security. But to-day the majority of stimuli are disturbing and the prevalent mood is of uncertainty. This uncertainty is widespread and connected with no one thing. There is fear of war.

There is fear of the breakdown of the financial and economic system. There is fear it won't break down. There is fear of fascism and there is fear of communism. There are objective reasons for all these fears: though not all of them are things to be afraid of. But in assessing

## THE CHANGING SCENE

the mood, the objective reason becomes of secondary importance. With such a mood, there is a danger if nothing happens, yet normal activity is clogged in anticipation of something happening, that any violent change will come as a relief. The conviction of impending tragedy is capable of precipitating disaster, because it is less terrible to face one known horror than any number of unknown ones.

It can be maintained, and with perhaps some truth, that the unrest of the years preceding the War, the Irish troubles, the strikes and suffragette demonstrations were forerunners of the war-spirit that made people join the colours with such eagerness. It is certainly true that the scattered sources of energy were immediately canalised by the War and that those suffragettes who were most militant for suffrage proved most militant against a foreign enemy. And here one is led to a strange conclusion.

Under capitalism, in its present stage, two phenomena are observable. In time of peace, private enterprise is restricted as little as possible. The state refuses to enter into competition with the individual, even though the effects of that interference and competition would improve the organisation of the common wealth. Each man shall have his chance. That is the slogan. And it sounds very democratic. But the chance varies with each individual, and even more with the parents of each individual. Wealth buys education: and after education, it buys positions. Democratic freedom of trading and industrial development works always in favour of the rich at the expense of the poor. The good of the state is made secondary to the good of vested interests. The poor are only capable of protecting their interests



by threats, by protests and by demonstrations.<sup>1</sup> The effect of this liberty of individual action is to make each man out for himself. His good is, and under capitalism must be, inconsistent with the good of the community. Economically this is as unsound as it is emotionally. In everyone there is a desire to create, to construct, to help: a desire which is centred in the family but which spreads further than those narrow boundaries. In peace-time, under capitalism, this emotion is starved, or else it runs directly counter to self-interest.

In time of war, on the other hand, the state takes over all important industries. While reaping in his profits, the industrialist or the middleman can pat himself on the back for serving his country. Self-interest and state-service can be represented as coincident. What are you doing in the Great War, daddy? I'm serving my King and Country by supplying boots to the gallant soldiers at a handsome profit, sonny. That is inconsistent, and absurd. But that is how the mind works. "I am giving my son to the war, says the capitalist, my only son. How can they say I want war?" And yet he does want war; not only because he's making his fortune, but for an enormous variety of reasons. Because, perhaps, he is unconsciously jealous of his son. Because in fantasy in the person of his son, he himself is going out to fight, and in reality he can sit cosily at home, feeling trans-

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, Monday, November 23rd, 1936: "Government departments concerned with measures for the relief of unemployment in the Special Areas have been instructed to speed up examination of the problem. The King's visit to South Wales and last week's long debate in Parliament have impressed Ministers with the strength of public feeling on the subject." The need of the Special Areas has been plain for the last ten years. All demonstrations, such as the Jarrow March, the Hunger Marches, have been sternly discouraged. And even now when there is talk of doing something, it is admittedly not being done to help the Distressed Areas, but to allay public indignation. Since the Government has succeeded in securing smashing majorities, the Opposition has been powerless to provide any check. Public protest is now forced to take the place of Parliamentary opposition.

ported with nobility and self-sacrifice. Because sorrow and danger and death, terrible as they are, are exciting. They give him the emotional kick that has gone out of his domestic, peace-time life.

At the same time as these suppressed emotions are working for an outlet in war, the economic rivalries which are inevitable under capitalism and imperialism are working closer and closer to war. Before the last war, Sir Norman Angell proved conclusively that war was a disaster to every state taking part. As things are, no state is capable of making a profit out of war. Therefore, he says, war is impossible, or if not impossible, at least suicidal.

But here again we have to distinguish between the good of society and the good of individuals. For certain individuals, speculators, manufacturers and salesmen of direct war materials such as guns and gas, or indirect materials such as boots and tunics, war is extremely profitable. Patriotism and prosperity go hand in hand for the producer, who can land Government contracts. The accumulation of a private fortune is sanctified by the name of public benefaction. It is not the prospect of adding further to his fortune that apparently outrages the producer. It is the plight of Great Britain and the Empire, after rejecting his services.

The Great War began as a war between conflicting imperialisms. It ended with the Russian Empire overthrown, the German and Austrian Empires overthrown, and the Allies terrified lest the revolution would engulf them also.

There is no union within capitalism except under threat of its extinction. The war which was the

fruit of imperial rivalry was brought to an end not by victory, but by the refusal of the common people to be sacrificed further to interests which were not their own. Russia was the new enemy: and to protect themselves against those elements of their own troops which were potentially revolutionary, the Allies directed these restless elements against the Russians. Their campaign was a ludicrous and costly failure. But it succeeded in extending the period of demobilisation. There was less danger from an army disbanded over a long period than from one suddenly turned back to civil life. In the case of England, also, it was possible to distract the most unruly elements towards Ireland. Bribed with a pound a day, the young men who hadn't got their bellyful of war were turned against the Irish.

This contradiction within capitalism, that it makes for rivalry, which makes for war, which makes for the destruction of capitalism, shewed itself very clearly by the end of the last war. There is a conflict of loyalties: one, national, urges the sinking of class differences in face of a common enemy; the second, international, urges the sinking of national differences in the presence of common economic interests. The last war was begun in the spirit of the first loyalty and ended in the spirit of the second.

The lesson of the War was plain for all to read. But it was a lesson that no capitalist could learn and remain a capitalist. To-day the 'Nationalist' Government is terrified of war. They know, despite their "plague on both your blouses," that another war means good-bye to the capitalist system as they know it. And yet they are powerless to prevent the growing tension of the international situation. They are led into the futile

accumulation of armaments, which they know is useless. They are compelled to abdicate that position of integrity in relation to international disputes which was Britain's boast and which wasn't entirely the mask for imperial ambitions. Afraid of the possibility of war to-day, they give way, step by step, making war to-morrow more and more certain. International justice has never been achieved in fact: but the very idea of it is being shewn by fascism to be a mockery. The position of Nietzsche that might was greater than right was an interesting debating point in 1912: to-day it is just plain fact.

I speak of war as something in the future. But it is not correct. War is being waged to-day in Spain. It is not a revolution in the sense of previous revolutions. It is an international war. The loyalties are not national, but the common loyalties of class. The situation of the modern world is mirrored in Spain. On the one side is the constitutionally elected Government of Spain, backed by the majority of Spanish people and pledged to a moderate Left Wing policy (but, be it noted, without a colonial policy). On the other, a force officered by aristocrats, whose personnel is drawn from the Foreign Legion—mercenaries, that is, who have proved their anti-social nature by crime—and Moors, a warlike but subject race to whom one Spaniard is the same as another, and all are enemies. (The absence of a Popular Front colonial policy is partially responsible for this). The rebels are completely outnumbered. But in each form of ammunition they are equipped in the most up-to-date manner. In modern war, man power is secondary to arms. Men with old shot-guns, scythes and sticks can do nothing against bombs, shells and machine-guns.

All the arms that they want are supplied to the rebels by Italy and Germany. And when even so General Franco was unable to make progress, German and Italian troops (to the number of 200,000) were imported to fight the Spaniards: while the German and Italian fleets supported the rebels in establishing a blockade. German and Italian officers drilled the rebel troops and flew the rebel planes, which are tended by German and Italian mechanics.

It is impossible in this case to talk of letting the Spaniards "fight it out between themselves." Mussolini has already made it clear that he is determined to see General Franco win. "Under no circumstances must Spain become a Soviet colony on the Mediterranean." And all that means is that under no circumstances may the Spanish people have for itself the Government which it wants. "This, of course," add the Italian papers, "is no contravention of the non-intervention pact." Why? Because at the moment Italy thinks that she has supplied all the arms necessary for Franco to finish the job off by himself; and anyway, she can smuggle through any more she wants.

Let us examine this pact of non-intervention.

When Franco landed in Spain, France immediately consulted the 'Nationalist' Government of England. What was their attitude? Supposing that France supplied arms to the Government,—and it must be remembered that in no previous case have arms been withheld from a government when attacked by insurgents,—and supposing that France was attacked by Italy or Germany, or both, what was the attitude of England to be? The 'Nationalist' Government replied that under those circumstances we could give France no

## THE CHANGING SCENE

assistance. France was, therefore, bound hand and foot. The best that could be devised was the pact of non-intervention. Franco had already received extensive supplies from the fascist powers, and while every possible delay was made to prevent signing the pact,—though France rather stupidly had already bound herself to withhold arms,—the fascist powers exported aeroplanes, guns and ammunition at top speed. And even after the pact was signed, they continued to do so.

The attitude of the 'Nationalist' Government is this. "Let us be realists. We know perfectly well that the non-intervention pact is being broken every day. But the real point is that fewer munitions are getting through than if no non-intervention pact was in force. It's all very well for you to say that as it is the rebels are getting much better supplies than the Government. That's true. But if the pact was relaxed, for every one machine-gun sent to the Government, two would be sent to the rebels."

This sounds awfully sane. But examine it. Though the fascist powers are prepared to help Franco all they can, they are not prepared to weaken their own forces in the process. Furthermore, what the rebels are suffering from is not lack of arms, but lack of men. It's no good having fifty thousand rifles, if you've only got twenty-five thousand men. Correspondingly it's not much use having fifty thousand men if you've only got twenty-five thousand rifles. The Government troops wouldn't mind the rebels having a dozen rifles each, providing that they themselves each had one.

The safest method of analysis both in economics and psychology is to fix the attention on what is done or not done, rather than what is said or not said. Where

explanations do not accord with facts,—and that is more often than not,—it is safe to say that the explanations are only a façade. The effect of the 'Nationalist' Government's policy has not been to shew impartiality to both sides, but to favour the rebels. There seem to me to be two reasons for this. The first is the already stated desire for peace at the price of justice and liberty. It is not "peace at any price," because the Government would shew no hesitation of fighting where not justice or liberty but our own imperial interests were at stake. The second is the Government's dread of anything connected with socialism. It is not difficult to realise how changed the attitude of the Government would be if the popularly elected Government of Spain had been fascist or reactionary and the Insurgents communists. We should then have had no talk about 'impartiality.' Instead we should have been told that, while taking no sides, the Government of Spain had an international right to buy arms abroad.

I have dealt with the Spanish question in this chapter because it illustrates very clearly the international situation to-day and twenty-five years ago. Capitalism is again working towards war. But the loyalties of nations are collapsing before the larger loyalties of international interests. The division of the world is becoming horizontal, rather than vertical. It is still the same disease from which society is suffering, but it is a later stage in that disease. Consequently, though we shall see a number of parallels in our comparison, there will always be a certain difference. However like one day is to the day before, there is always this difference, that it is the day after.

## CHAPTER II

### *Propaganda*

“‘There has never been anything like it before,’ he said. ‘Propaganda is our first line of defence. If you were to ask me whether I would rather have a powerful fleet of battleships, a mighty force of aeroplanes, or a Propaganda Ministry, I should say: “Give me the Ministry.” Let the generals wear their uniforms and quarrel about tactics, about infantry or artillery. The army at my command is more powerful than any of theirs. If I decide to-night that the people of Bidlo must have a certain thought in their heads at 9.45 a.m. to-morrow, I give the word. Exactly at 9.45 a.m. to-morrow there will not be a head in Bidlo to which my thought has not penetrated. Where is the general who can do as much?’”—HILLEL BERNSTEIN, *Choose a Bright Morning*.

WHEN THE suffrage and education were extended in this country, the ruling classes were afraid that they would lose control. What was going to be the effect of raising the standard of intelligence in classes which had always been taught to submit? Unless suitable methods could be devised there was grave danger of the control of affairs passing from the hands of employers to employed. When the bill was introduced to provide salaries for M.P.s, it looked as if the last defence of the ruling classes was gone. Membership of Parliament no longer depended on wealth and privilege. Theoretically at least, any Tom, Dick or Harry could get into Parliament.

It is obvious that in a state where the majority of people are governed in the interests of a minority, if the minority is to keep its power without constant resort to



## PROPAGANDA

armed force, it must use continual propaganda to mislead the majority. Flattery, threats of disaster, promises of better things, false news, false analyses of situations and the cultivation of false ideals: all these are useful. It is necessary to weld the whole life of the community: to play one interest off against another, to appeal to the self-interest of the individual in order to separate him from the group, to promise him rewards in this world and the next for obedience to authority, to present the desired ideas at a very early age and to stigmatise any views running contrary to those ideas; in fact from birth to condition each individual into the humble acceptance of the state into which it has pleased God to call him.

At the same time, it is desirable that this process of conditioning should be performed unconsciously: so that the individual should have the feeling that he is in fact free, that the thoughts which have been pumped into him are either self-evident truths or opinions at which he has arrived by the might of his own intellect. Furthermore, it has been found that the dissemination of half-baked ideas, mutually conflicting and variously true, is very helpful in producing a contempt for thought. "It all depends on the way you look at it." "Opinions differ." "It's a question, see." How many discussions flare up and fizzle out with such conclusions. It is safer for a ruling caste to have under it a mass cheated and confused with a hundred half-formulated ideas than to have a following with solid principles and clear-cut ideas.

The first objective of the ruling caste is to make people believe that its own propaganda is not propaganda but a realistic statement of facts, the plain, wholesome truth. The second objective is to make

people believe that the propaganda of other parties is false. The measure of success can be seen in the secondary usage, "Oh, that's just propaganda," meaning "That is not true."

If we are to begin to understand the place of propaganda in the last twenty-five years, we have got to get this clear. Firstly, propaganda is not limited to the propaganda of opposition bodies. Secondly, propaganda is not necessarily false or true. We can only examine its truth or falsehood by appeal to facts, the use of our minds. Propaganda is a form of advertisement: but its returns are not in 'Sales' but in confidence, obedience and votes. It is obvious that the party in power will have the greatest opportunities for using propaganda, because it is able to control education, publicity media, the state Church and the pomp of officialdom.

Now, the most honest form of advertisement is that which bases its interest on information. It says, "Goods of such and such quality, made by so and so, are for sale to the public at such and such a price." The advertiser in this case depends on the quality of the goods to speak for themselves. He knows that when anybody has found something good, he tells others. And the power of his advertisement rests on the goodness of his product. It is the same with propaganda. Where there is nothing to hide, the propaganda is open and informative. It states facts and provides examples.

Unfortunately it has been discovered that it is more profitable to produce inferior-quality goods and advertise them heavily than to produce a good quality and let them speak for themselves. Given the proper advertising, you can foist almost any trash on to the public.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lord Dunsany's comedy, *Chaezo*.

There are many ways of advertising by appeal to elements other than the goods you are advertising. For example, the direct method of advertising, which makes a certain brand of goods synonymous with the whole class. Think Films, think Hollywood. Think Petrol, think Shell., Think Soap, think Lux. This is achieved by slogan, by picture or by the incorporation of irrelevant concepts. Take Mr. Therm. The filthy old gasworks, the geyser green with verdigris, the gas-cooker black with stale fats had collected a sense of dirt round the idea of gas. To correct this, besides the new type of gas-cookers and refrigerators, you have Mr. Therm, clean, gay and always at your service. You must get rid of your old cooker and have a clean, bright new one.

Transfer this method to politics. The reputation of a party becomes tarnished. The old dogs have got bad names. Take new ones. Tory, Unionist, Conservatives, they're worn out. But the same *galère*, tricked out in 'National' finery, sweep the country. The same plain old faces, but a new name. A new name, but the same old policy, the same old antics. It doesn't matter. I'm for the Nation, so I must vote for the National Party. Hollywood for Films, Cruft's for Dogs, Old Sealed Lips for the Nation. It's absurd. But it works, not on me, not on you, but on countless people to whom 'the word' is still magical, who cannot believe that if a statement is given the dignity of print, it still may be a lie.

The instruments of propaganda have enormously increased in the last quarter of a century. In 1912 the reading public was very much smaller. Most families only bought a paper on Sundays. There was no radio entertainment. The cinemas were in their infancy.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

There were fewer books, fewer libraries, fewer means of communication and therefore of social intercourse, and fewer advertisements.

Both our entertainment and our instruction is filled with propaganda. Like children, we are told things in the way which our betters think best for us. And we believe them. We are told to be alarmed, and we are alarmed. We are told to be confident and we are reassured. We are addressed over the wireless by people we know to be experts and we accept what we are told, even though we may know that the speech has been blue-pencilled before it was delivered and that it represents not what the expert wants to say, but what the officials of the B.B.C. will allow him to say, which is a way of saying, negatively, only what they want him to say. They are, in fact, not hiring his brain, but his name, as a support for propaganda, which quite likely would have little value without his name.

The advantage of this propaganda is that it aims to achieve nothing positive. It succeeds even if it fails to gain credence. It doesn't matter whether the public believes it or whether it says, "It's all lies." The danger-point is when the public says: "These are lies. Those are truths." The capitalist politicians are in power, not because the majority of the nation has confidence in them, but because the nation has no confidence in any politicians. Each one's as bad as the rest.

I am dealing in this chapter with the media and nature of propaganda, because in the succeeding chapters the same contrasts will occur over and over again and the sooner we get the common material out of the way, the better for everybody.

The first question one has to ask oneself, presented with any form of propaganda, whether hidden or open, is: "Where's the money coming from? And why?"

Take the B.B.C. What are the influences at work on the Corporation?

Firstly, the B.B.C. is under charter. If it doesn't behave itself, it'll lose its charter. It is not an official organisation, like a branch of the Civil Service. If it was, its effectiveness as an instrument of propaganda would be lessened. But it is checked even more effectively by the threat of the loss of its charter. This semi-official body is more sensitive to official disapproval than, for example, the Foreign Office or the Treasury.

Secondly, from its advertisements in the *Listener* and the *Radio Times*, the B.B.C. derives a revenue of over half a million a year. The Corporation is forbidden to advertise products. It is even forbidden to make such suggestions as "It would be very nice to go cruising for a holiday," because that would be regarded by the seaside resorts as an advertisement for shipping firms calculated to draw people away from the seaside. But though these stringent and rather cramping precautions are taken to prevent the wireless being used for advertisement, the advertisers are able to use a certain negative pressure on the Corporation. A few years ago a medical report on food values was produced under the auspices of the B.B.C. In the third category, as Expensive and Of Low Nutriment, were included Meat Extracts. This piece of information was of considerable interest, because so many poor people buy meat extracts for the sick at great personal sacrifice. But in fear of losing not only the advertising of the meat-extract firms but of all their advertisers, the authorities omitted the

third category altogether. "People, they argued, ought to be able to infer from its omission that meat extract's no good."

Thirdly, and only thirdly, there is the public, the people who listen to what manages to get through. I shall talk about them later. What is important here is that a political censorship takes place, followed by a censorship by vested interests. So that even supposing you didn't get any lies over the ether, you wouldn't get all the truth.

In the case of newspapers, there are three elements. In addition to the two above, there is a censorship exercised by the owner of the paper, both as an industrialist and as a politician. The paper which you buy for a penny costs threepence to produce. It is run primarily as a vehicle for advertising. Huge sums are spent in inducing you to read your paper (or, at least, buy it), not because a profit can be made from you, but because higher prices can be charged for advertisements. The advertiser is capable of influencing the paper under the threat of withdrawing his advertisements, and in certain cases under threat of boycott. (Of course, it isn't done crudely. It's said very nicely, but it boils down to the same thing in the end.)

The political censorship is very civilised. When there is anything which it is particularly important should not find its way into print, the editor is brought down and told in confidence what the situation is. Then he is on his honour not to print it, even though it would be extremely valuable to his party.

For fear of libel, I can only submit as an example of the connection between the private affairs of a newspaper owner and his paper's policy a case in which the probity of the proprietor is beyond doubt.

## PROPAGANDA

The *Daily News* used to be one of the principal organs of Liberal thought. It prided itself on its humanitarian outlook and the family of Cadbury, controlling the paper, was well-known for its Quakerism and philanthropy. In the year 1906, the *Daily News* ran a campaign of agitation against Chinese slavery, which considerably helped the Liberals in the General Election of that year. Yet five years before this date, the Cadburys had received information that the raw material bought by them from the Portuguese Islands of San Thomé and Príncipe was produced under conditions of slave labour. With Messrs. Fry and Rowntree they sent out Mr. Burt, who confirmed this and submitted a report, which was handed to Sir Edward Grey in October 1906. Grey told them to hold their hand until it could be seen whether diplomatic pressure could be brought on Portugal to remedy this state of affairs. It was not till 1909 that negotiations broke down: and during that time no word was mentioned in the *Daily News* about slavery in Portuguese West Africa. No one would suggest that the Cadbury family acted with any but honourable motives, even though the *Evening Standard* impugned these motives at the time. But it is clear that the Cadbury control of the *Daily News* was responsible for the exclusion of mention of this business from their columns, this exclusion being attributable to the belief that the matter could be settled diplomatically. This indicates in a harmless way the harm which an unscrupulous newspaper proprietor could do.\*

The film industry is more complex than either Radio

\* In the first section of *Forward from Liberalism*, Stephen Spender analyses at some length the inconsistency between the 'liberal mind' and the capitalist nature of liberalism. The same factors are in play between the socialism of the Labour Party and the capitalism of Odhams, the proprietors of the *Daily Herald*.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

or Press. Certain films are made for the advertisement of individual products, others to advertise state services, and still more to entertain the public, or give them world news. Each of these needs separate investigation.

Most advertisement films aim at entertainment. They are coloured cartoons, or comic shorts, with a slogan to them. They aim purely at an association of pleasure with the product advertised and they have little social interest. The Gas Light and Coke Company, on the other hand, have produced two films, one on Housing and the other on Nutrition, each of which have caused considerable discussion and given publicity to subjects not otherwise touched by the films. In a civilised state, films of this type would be made by Government Departments for general information. The film would be used to arouse the necessary feeling in the people as a whole to remedy these ills. But in modern England, where no money can be diverted from the manufacture of destructive weapons except under pressure, the official policy is to keep very quiet about social services. The Gas Light and Coke Company is therefore exploiting the opportunity rejected by the Government and finding in the performance of a socially useful task a first-class advertisement.

The Gas Light and Coke Company films fall into the class of documentary. The G.P.O. also has its staff of documentarians, headed by John Grierson, who, some years ago, made an excellent film called *Drifters*. Mr. Grierson has collected and trained a band of young men in the technique of cinema. They have reached a very high standard of virtuosity. And they need to: because this staff of experts is being used to advertise the efficiency of the postal services. Their function is not to comment,



## PROPAGANDA

not to shew things as they are, not to inspire any emotion except that of pride and wonder at the skill of the General Post Office. We see the diligent workers gallantly doing their daily task; we see the six o'clock mail being collected by the collectors, sorted by the sorters, franked by the frankers, despatched by the despatchers. It is technically very correct: everybody else's tricks and mannerisms have been learnt: and if it is possible, a shot or two from Mr. Grierson's early masterpiece *Drifters* is cut in. But these films are as dead as Sunday-school lectures, as lantern slides of Travel in the Holy Land, because there is nothing organic in these false-to-life, true-to-life documentaries. They are all grimly obsequious, like boys toadying to masters or clerks smarming to the boss.

This sterility is not to be blamed on to Mr. Grierson or his colleagues. Mr. Grierson proved in the only film he has made that he could handle real-life material with emotion. It is the fault rather of the official use to which these men are being put. They are conducting propaganda of the most reactionary all's right with the world type.

Here, again, the need appears for distinguishing between word and fact. Propagandising for his own propaganda, Mr. Grierson wrote in the introduction to *Documentary* by Paul Rotha that, used in its broad sense, the documentary could proudly boast of being propaganda, but "if propaganda takes on its more political meaning, the sooner documentary is done with it the better." This means, "if propaganda is of such a nature as to accept the ideology (forgive the word, but what other is there?) of capitalism, it is not propaganda in its more political meaning, but if it accepts the ideology of Marxism, it is." If you accept that, you get a queer

situation. A Marxist film is not propaganda, if shewn in Russia; but it is, if shewn in England. And correspondingly, even those innocent little films issuing from the G.P.O. film unit take on sinister counter-revolutionary meanings in U.S.S.R.

The truth is that when a film is financed by interests other than those of the entertainment industry, the financiers are out to get results, either in sales or states of mind. Mr. Grierson is not paid to tell the truth, but to make more people use the parcel post. Mr. Grierson may like to talk about social education, surplised in self-importance and social benignity. Other people may like hearing him. But even if it sounds like a sermon, a sales talk is still a sales talk.

Mr. Rotha is another documentarian. He is not tied down to working for a single interest. He picks and chooses: or maybe he just takes what comes along. But anyway, making films that way, he has kept a certain independence of mind. He sells his epic sense to ship-builders and Imperial Airways. To judge by the contrast between his films and his books, his bosses, if they don't tell him what to put in, at least tell him what he's got to cut out. As a result, there is a gap between the film and real life. The film doesn't fit into its social context. That epic sense of Man's conquest of earth, and sky and sea wouldn't sound so like stage thunder, if one could feel more certain 'what man?' What man has conquered the air, for example? The man who designed the aeroplane; the men who built it but will never fly it; the professional pilot who is paid as much as a lorry-driver; the people who can afford to travel in it; the people who derive their incomes from aviation stock; or the man who looks up, shading his eyes with

his hand, and takes a rest from his work till it disappears behind a cloud ?

G.P.O. Film Unit or Rotha, it's the same thing. The chap who pays the piper calls the tune. Not because he knows more about music, but because the piper's got a belly to fill.

The two other most important types of film propaganda are the news film and the story picture. The news film is not run as an economic proposition. News films are given away with feature pictures, like teapots with a two-pound pot of jam. They're not designed to give you either accurate or interesting news. They're just to make you feel that you've had your money's worth.

Result: News films are a hotchpotch. The cameraman is sent where it is certain that he'll be able to find something he can shoot. He goes to reviews, marches past, tattoos, football, cricket and boxing matches, mayoral receptions, launchings of ships by the wives of generals, peers or politicians. Week after week, year in and out, he photographs the same old carnivals, motor races, horse-races, and interviews with record-breaking pilots on their landing at the field. These are "the eyes and ears of the world." This is the weekly bringing of the world to the world.

However, in the case of a war, revolution or government propaganda, camera-men are sent to the scene of action and send back film which is 'cut in,' between Lord Nuffield's visit to the Bicycle Show and a motor race in Florida in which no entrant is over five. These extra-routine and controversial sequences are offered to the public without proper explanation. During the Spanish Civil War several news films have been shewn

## THE CHANGING SCENE

which are flagrantly pro-fascist in sympathy. Many readers will have seen, for example, the film in which Government soldiers were shewn firing at a statue of Christ. They will remember the immediate antagonism aroused by this deliberate act of sacrilege. But they will probably not have reflected, any more than the rest of the audience reflected, how the camera-man was able to get photographs of what to him must have been a lucky scoop. Enquiries have been made as to the origin of these pictures: and it has been established that they were genuine, that the soldiers were in fact Government soldiers. But it has also been established that the camera-man gave them each five pesetas and asked them to shoot.

It may be argued that the religious convictions of a soldier can't be very strong if he will sacrifice them for five pesetas. But the convictions of the camera-man are even weaker. He was able by joining real shots to a false explanation, to produce in the audience an instant and instinctive pro-fascist bias. There was no mention of the cause of the war, of the forces at play, of the original aggression: merely the false interpretation of manufactured news.

In America, the need has been felt for a carefully constructed film magazine, dealing each month with the history of states in recent years, the rise and fall of rulers, social problems and industrial problems. The law of libel is much more lax in America than it is in England. But even there the *March of Time*, as it is called, has to be very careful. Exposure of past abuses is all right. But nearly always the public has to be left with the impression that everything's rosy now. The American public has to be treated as carefully as

## PROPAGANDA

the King being shepherded round South Wales by Sir Kingsley Wood and Mr. Ernest Brown so that he shouldn't see anything he oughtn't to see. By the time that the *March of Time* reaches England, it is changed in tone and sometimes in meaning. For example, the political bias of the film monthly is known to be mildly radical: yet the section devoted to the *Croix de Feu* was pro-fascist by the time that it reached this country. What had happened was simple. A shot showing Col. La Rocque receiving money from Schneider-Creusot had been excised, because it was held to be libellous. In its mutilated form it represented the Colonel as the saviour of modern France. The moral was reversed: and the censor, God bless him, didn't consider that a pro-fascist film ought to be censored as political propaganda.

Finally we come to the story film, the films that we really pay our money to see, films that for the most part are regarded just as entertainment, without any propagandist bias. What do the people who put up money for *them* expect to get out of it? More money, of course. The box-office is the supreme judge. What pays most is best.

But there is no point in getting more money if you're going to lose it. If you could make millions by producing socialist films, it still wouldn't pay, because you would be cutting the ground from under your own feet.

For years the mainstay of the films was the idiotic wish-fulfilment film; the picture that took you out of yourself and put you in dreamland. Now it won't work. I don't know why. I suppose it's partly the depression and the international situation that is making people rather impatient of those sweet old trips to fairyland. And I think it's partly that the film audiences

are becoming more critical, the standard they demand from a film is much higher than it was. They see through a formula quicker, and the producers can't go on repeating stale ideas for so long.

Whatever may be the cause of this change, the directors of the film industry have begun to realise that to-day the audience wants a reality-situation. The old fantasy of office-boy to power boss, servant girl to countess, powder monkey to admiral has lost its magic. Instead the modern film formula begins with the situation of things as they are and then the magic wand is waved just as it has always been waved, but there is no pumpkin, no golden coach, no Prince Charming. The mills start working. Jobs come, prosperity, capitalism works again.

*Mr. Deeds comes to Town* was the most successful comedy of 1936, with the exception, perhaps, of *Modern Times*. In *Mr. Deeds* the new tendency is quite apparent. Halfway through the film it ceases to be pure comedy. A bankrupt farmer breaks into the Deeds' home and makes an impassioned speech about the failure of farming. He threatens to shoot Longfellow Deeds and then breaks down in hysterics. Simple Longfellow, the hick poet who has inherited millions, decides that the best thing that he can do is to divide his money in small lots and resettle bankrupt farmers on the land. When he is tried for insanity, the farmers pack the court. He is their hope of prosperity. Here at last is a wealthy man who is going to do something about them. The fact that they stand to gain so much by his acquittal means that the drama is intensified. And when at last he is acquitted, the audience feels, "And the farmers are saved too. Now everything's all right."

Of course, everything is not all right. In a country where a good harvest means ruin, it'll help no one to produce more, until the problems of distribution are solved. But that doesn't matter,—at least, for the time being. The audience goes out of the cinema, delighted with the humour of the film, and with the additional pleasure of feeling something has been done for those poor devils of farmers. If only the rich were all like him, feels the audience, then all our troubles would be over. If only the rich were all like him, in fact, it would show that the troubles were not due to the villainy of individuals, but to the failure of a system.

The cinema, in the hands of Hollywood, reduces all problems to personalities. Society doesn't exist, only individual people, or collections of people. *The Mills of Doom*, a film with little distinction, shews this tendency admirably. Owing to the depression, a steel works has been closed down. The works is managed by May Robson, firing in all cylinders. She is the last strong character in the family. Her children and grandchildren are parasites, seeking only pleasure. She wants to retire. But none of the family will take over the business. She gives up the work to her former subordinates. The firm goes down and down. The steel works makes ploughs, but nobody wants to buy ploughs, because of the depression. May Robson rallies round. She raises more capital. She is going to start up the mills. Her grandson, hurrying to stop the men rioting by telling them the news, is shot by the police and dies babbling of champagne. The granddaughter rallies round. She is going to back the old lady up, carry on the family tradition. Everything will be all right. The mills start working to make ploughs, which nobody

## THE CHANGING SCENE

can afford to buy. Here the depression is attributed to the lazy pleasure-seeking of the family. And the solution is to create a demand by increasing the supply.

Examine any one of the political or social films coming from Hollywood. They make sense to start with, but they end with the most fantastic conclusions. They express the discontent and anxiety of the multitude to start with, and having gained confidence, they propose any remedy except the obvious economic one.

The Press, the radio and the cinema need tremendous financial backing to get across. And there are very, very few rich men prepared to put up money for propaganda, one of the effects of which will be to reduce their wealth. There are capitalists who are prepared to fight fascism, and to spend money doing it. Because there are clear-sighted business men who know that once fascism gets established, it doesn't make things any easier for business. But even these are not prepared to sponsor socialism. They remain liberal. Liberty of enterprise and increased social services. "Of course, I don't want the poor to be poor," says the liberal. "I'd like him to have just as much as I have. But I'm damned if I'll have just as little as he has. How could I, with my position?"

The financial resources of socialism are small, compared to those of capitalism. And in consequence, Right Wing propaganda is very much wider spread than Left Wing. But there is no ratio between means of propaganda and party-strength. If there were, the number of socialists in this country would be very small.

Socialist propaganda proceeds humbly by pamphlet, and word of mouth. There is one daily paper, the *Daily Worker*, a modest sheet beside the advertisement-



## PROPAGANDA

subsidised Press, but with this merit. Its politics are open. They are not dictated by the veiled interests of proprietor or advertisers. If bought at night, it is first with the news. If bought in the morning, it is out-of-date. But its views are consistent; and much of its contents unique, because it contains matter suppressed by the capitalist Press. Though it is sometimes irritating, because it contains more views than news, the pluck with which its staff and salesmen have kept it alive and growing in the face of constant opposition and slandering prejudices me in its favour.

There are Left Wing weeklies such as the *Statesman*, designed unfortunately primarily for Oxford and Cambridge radicals and civil servants; and more serious monthlies such as the *Labour Monthly* and the *Left Review*. Most helpful of all is the *Left Book Club* founded in 1936 by Victor Gollancz and increasing rapidly in membership every month. There is a Left Theatre, with a hopeful future under trade union support, and The Unity, an amateur working-man's theatre in London at King's Cross. From the B.B.C. there is little support. No communist politician has been allowed to speak: and academic Marxists are always kept academic, and the other side is heavily put immediately afterwards. (An overworked member of the B.B.C. was seen waiting at a bus-stop. Whenever a bus came up, he walked all round it, until the bus drove off. When asked what he was doing, he said, "I want to get to Victoria. But while I'm seeing all sides of the question, it drives off.") There are a few socialist films made in Russia and there is Pabst's *Kameradschaft*. But they are not shewn on the cinema circuits, and many of them are cut beyond recognition.

The forces of right and left are numerically nearly equal; but the financial strength lies at the moment with the right. Compared with Italy and Germany, we still have considerable liberty of speech, even though, or perhaps because, the power of reaching vast audiences rests with the rich. But we must not by reason of our comparative liberty imagine that England is the land of perfect liberty that the British-boosters make it out to be. While vested interests believe in the efficacy of their own propaganda, they don't mind a few dissentient voices, because they know they'll be drowned in the babble. As soon as they begin to be uncertain of themselves they'll start curtailing liberties. They've already started, not in their own interests of course, but "in the interests of the nation." And the odd thing about "the interests of the nation" is that though you and I often find our personal interests at variance with the interests of the nation, if only your interests are powerful enough and you know the right people, your interests are identical with those of the nation.

Some idealists are reduced to a state of impotent rage at the way the mass of people is fooled and beguiled to accept the good of a few as their own good. Others, in my opinion more wisely, accept it as a fact and set themselves quietly to explain these methods of deception. Injustice, lying and trickery do not move them to indignation, except when indignation is a useful emotion. They say, "If people know the forces at work in forming opinion, they will be able to assess and distinguish propaganda. Spluttering's our self-indulgence. What we have to do is to tell them."

## CHAPTER III

### *Drama*

I AM calling 'this chapter deliberately Drama and not Theatre, or Stage. I have two good reasons for doing so. The first is that I was born in 1908, and am consequently not the person to compare pre-War actors and actresses with those of the present day: and the second is that I wish to make no comparison of the so-called 'commercial' theatre.

The 'commercial' theatre has nothing to do with drama. It is a form of entertainment for the Mayfair-Knightsbridge-Balham public. It has not even the merit of being superficial. If it had, it might mirror the changing tendencies of society. It is artificial, a trash product for shoddy minds.

I do not take up the attitude of the highbrow, who says that anything produced merely for entertainment is contemptible. My attitude is that of a person who wants, likes, enjoys entertainment, but cannot find it from the West End 'commercial' theatre. I have tried to examine the reasons for this, and they are threefold. The shows are badly written, badly produced, and badly acted. I think if these faults were remedied, we might have entertaining entertainment. But if we achieved that, the division between 'commercial' and 'non-commercial' theatres might be found to have disappeared.

This division, which has existed throughout this century, between what is good and what is lucrative, is one of the most vicious divisions in our civilisation.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

(It is a split which is wider than the Arts. In commerce, exactly the same thing happens. The most lucrative employments are the least useful. A Stock Exchange parasite can make infinitely more money than a producer. A producer, who plans but does not execute, can make much more money than his technicians.) But here we are concerned only with the distinction of 'commercial' and 'non-commercial' in the theatre and the effect that it has on the drama.

Art and entertainment are split. Entertainment is for tired men with full bellies, for suburban couples who wish in fantasy to get the entrée to Mayfair and then return to ham sandwiches at The Nook and thank God that they are not as other men, richer than the poor, more moral than the rich. Entertainment is for colonials, to go the rounds of the theatres as to the Tower, the Cathedral and National Gallery, and return to Bloemfontein or Wagga-Wagga, and tell their neighbours they have seen everything—yes, everything. Entertainment is for the young man to take his girl to and get her titillated before they go on to the cabaret, the propenultimate stage of bedding. Entertainment is for those with opera-glasses what Brighton pier is for pubescents staring into spectroscopes.

Dramatic Art, as unhealthy in its own way as entertainment, by reason of this split, is for a few, an empty-bellied, self-conscious minority, liking to have what is initially easy made obscure by some technical twist. Art, like charities and morris-dancing, survives as a Good Thing, lives hand-to-mouth and for its faults can always plead impecuniosity. Its relation to society is false. It exists by indulgence, a poor, though talented, relation. You're not allowed to criticise the Drama.

As soon as you do, you're written down as a philistine. So in the interests of this spoilt child, you have to put up with incompetent production, pretentious dialogue and wooden acting.

It is accepted as inevitable that the serious drama must be economically unsound. Yet there is no effort made to subsidise it. Agitation has been going on for the last twenty-five years to found a national theatre, on the analogy of the Comédie Française. But it is no nearer success than it was in 1912.

Under the circumstances it is surprising that there are any serious dramatists still in existence. What dramatists there are owe their survival not to the West End stage, but to the Dublin Gate, the Abbey Theatre, suburban and provincial repertory and the New York stage. Recently, the Group, the Left and the Unity theatres have provided a new centre for dramatists in London. Previous to them, the only experimental theatres in London itself were the Arts and the Gate Theatres.

This change in patronage is significant. It is a safe generalisation to say that before the War the cultural tradition of England was preserved and interpreted by the liberal members of the middle class. It was to them that the dramatists turned naturally for an audience. But to-day, while the liberal tradition still lingers on, the true patrons of our culture are communist: and communists are the audience most naturally addressed.

The evolution of George Bernard Shaw is a very good example of this. Shaw began his career as a socialist. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity. He believed what he was saying as far as he is able to believe anything. But it was no good. There was no audience. Nobody wanted to listen to his plays, nobody wanted to

put them on. The absurd state of affairs arose, of a dramatist of startling originality unable to get a hearing. The middle classes were not going to pay good money down to listen to themselves being attacked, however wittily.

This may partly have been due to the fact that, despite his originality and his wit, Shaw was not a dramatist. He had little sense of drama, of character or situation. His plays did not evolve organically: the action did not spring from internal necessity, but from the caprice of the dramatist. He chose a number of unlikely characters and submitted them to experiments. *Pygmalion* is an explicit experiment. Take a raw, ignorant girl, with some looks, teach her to speak with a high-class accent and even her vulgarities will pass as wit, her natural use of the word 'bloody' will cease to be shocking and become smart. The success of *Pygmalion* depends really on the explicitness of this mechanism. In the other plays, Shaw himself experiments with his characters as arbitrarily as his professor of phonetics did with Miss Doobittle. But there is no dramatic reason why he should do so. The reason lies in the dramatist's own character. All Shaw's other qualities are subordinated to his egotism. The true function of a dramatist is to subordinate himself to his characters, and to express his ideas through the mouths and actions of living people. Shaw cannot bear to do this. He has to express his own ideas directly. His players are merely reduplication of his own personality: and his plays, monologues spoken by a variety of persons. Whereas the true dramatist distorts philosophical truth, to present the limited knowledge of his characters; Shaw distorts it to show off. His brilliance

is not that of being right, but of saying the opposite half-truth to the half-truth he imagines his audience to believe. Taken without an audience, the plays are as stupid as the most platitudinous landlady's conversation. They rely on the prejudice of the audience to produce an intelligible resultant. As soon as the prejudices of his audiences change, his plays will become meaningless.

In order to get his plays across, Shaw had to introduce more and more buffoonery: and at the same time he toned down his own opinions. By 1908 he became what he has remained, a philosophical jester, unable to decide whether he was making a fool of other people or himself. By challenging certain prejudices, which Ibsen and Butler had already challenged without much success in this country, he shook people up. They began to feel that their prejudices were out of date and get themselves new prejudices. They began to believe in the Life Spirit, a vague immanence with an organic urge to goodness. They began to resurrect the Reason. They did not lose their faith. Instead they lost their faith in Faith and transferred it to Reason. It was all so simple for Shawian characters, who when they cut themselves oozed ideas, not blood. And it was going to be just as simple for human beings. It was only reasonable to be reasonable. And then the War came. And the War was the answer to Shaw, just as it was the answer to Liberal idealism.

In Shaw and in his contemporary Wells there is an imaginative gap. Both of them are over-intellectualised and they cannot see the factual world through the fog of their ideas. They believe that ideas are capable, apparently without finding expression in political movements, in remoulding mankind. Hence their Utopias.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

They see the present as stupid and irrational; they see a sane, organised society of the future. But they cannot see the process of transition. They outvie themselves in evasions of means. In Wells' film, *The Shape of Things to Come*, the mystic peace gas, brewed by nancies in American oil-cloth, suddenly brings a change in men's hearts. In *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, the archangel Gabriel blows his trumpet and liquidates all economically unsatisfactory mortals.

Of course, Shaw and Wells would say, "These are just parables. They mustn't be taken literally. It's just a way of presenting the contrast of an imperfect and a perfect society." But the point is that this 'perfect' society is being realised in the U.S.S.R. And it was not the archangel Gabriel blowing his trumpet, but Lenin crossing the frontier that started it. It wasn't peace gas, but revolution and fighting on thirteen different fronts against foreign invaders that established this régime. Neither Wells nor Shaw will face the implications of their ideas. And this means that they ignore the true dramatic conflict of their material, the power of the capitalists levelled against the force of the mass.

Clifford Odets, a young American dramatist, the modern counterpart of Shaw, so far from avoiding the issue, makes his drama out of the struggle itself. In *Waiting for Lefty*, for example, the whole action centres round a strike meeting, waiting for one of the leaders, Lefty, to arrive and report progress. The audience of the theatre is treated as the audience of the strike meeting and is harangued from the stage. Inset scenes reflect on the various characters on the platform. And the climax is formed by news coming through that



Lefty is dead. Shall they go on with the fight? Yes.

This is merely a dramatised version of a situation, recurring in the class struggle. It fixes on the conflict taking place here and now: and conveys it not in terms of ideas but of people and situation.<sup>1</sup>

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In 1912 the only other English dramatist of importance was John Galsworthy. Harley Granville Barker, author of *The Madras House* and *The Voysey Inheritance*, in many ways a much greater man of the theatre than Galsworthy, had given up writing for production.

John Galsworthy was not an ambitious playwright. He knew what he wanted to do and he did it with force and clarity. The limitations of his vision made what he saw clear and precise. *Loyalties*, *Justice*, *The Skin Game*. What good titles! How well they fit! Where Shaw failed through lack of objectivity and invention to make plots of any intrinsic interest, Galsworthy succeeded admirably. The argument of his plays is identical with the incident.

Into these plays Galsworthy put his social ideas, his criticisms of society. The criticisms were not profound and certainly not revolutionary. But they were practical, and they were presented with an intuitive knowledge of the audience he was addressing. Winston Churchill is supposed to have been so impressed by *Justice* that he formulated his prison reform bill on it.

This relationship between a propagandist work of art and politics is a thing that seems to have been lost. After the War, writers retreated into themselves. The

<sup>1</sup> It is significant that though three plays of Odets were being performed contemporaneously in New York, and running to large audiences, no commercial producer has had the courage to put him on in London. *Waiting for Lefty*, however, has been produced by the amateur working-man's theatre, the Unity.

influence of the War was to cause a recoil, a withdrawal from public life. Public affairs were too bloody, too disgusting to have anything to do with.

Now, in 1936, the reaction is coming. Writers have given up regarding themselves as outside society, solitary commentators on the inanity of man. They are coming back into public life. Their talents, they realise, are not those that disqualify them from action. On the contrary, by virtue of these talents they have a peculiar function to perform in the state. It is their business to apprehend and interpret contemporary life: to explain to itself a world in chaos: to indicate where hope lies, where danger.

The relation of Galsworthy to his public was a healthy relation. And the attitude of the post-depression writer is also healthy. But there is a profound difference between them. Galsworthy addressed himself naturally to the middle classes: and the middle class understood immediately what he had to say. There was a common culture between them. To-day, however, the post-depression writer does not address himself to the middle class, but to the enemies of fascism, irrespective of class. Many differences exist in the constructive measures people consider should be taken to solve our problems, but there is a solid common front agreed to resist fascism at all cost. The East End slogan "They shall not pass" was the affirmation of the common will of liberals, labourites and communists. It is to that audience that the modern writer appeals.

Galsworthy's plays may seem superficial to us now. The problems which seemed to him isolated and superficial have revealed themselves as profound. The flaws in the surface of capitalism have been probed and proved

to be deep fissures. But at the time, Galsworthy's social plays helped to achieve social ends that were undoubtedly valuable. They were not inspired; they were limited to a prosaic naturalism. But they struck home.

The great revival of the stage before the War came not from Shaw, however, nor Galsworthy, nor Barrie, Jones, Pinero and Hankin, but from Dublin. At the beginning of the century, the Irish Movement was gaining in strength. There was a theoretical belief in Celtic immersion. A play, written in English, was translated into Erse and then retranslated into English. In the process it was considered to have gained certain Irish properties. Yeats, Lady Gregory and, for a brief and barren period, George Moore worked on the lines of producing plays based on Celtic folk-lore. But this return was not in fact to the people, to the root source of literature, but to an early literary source. Its inspiration was as artificial as that of the Pre-Raphaelites. That is not to say that many of the plays which Yeats and Lady Gregory produced<sup>1</sup> were not very delightful. They are charming. The verse is free and lovely. But these plays are not spontaneous. There is something arty about them, something too self-conscious. The desire to have a drama, 'remote, spiritual and ideal,' was inconsistent with the national ideal. J. M. Synge, with *Riders to the Sea*, and even more with *The Playboy of the Western World*, smashed through the literary conventions of the Irish theatre. It is a mistake, of course, to imagine Synge like a Burns rising from the peasant class and speaking for the peasants. He drew his material from the Aran Islanders: and, I am told, drew it quite as

<sup>1</sup> In the prefaces to his plays, Yeats describes with admirable objectivity the methods of collaboration with Lady Gregory: and, as usual, he assesses the faults and virtues of his own work with the utmost detachment.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

inaccurately as Robert Flaherty in his film, *Man of Aran*. That didn't matter overmuch. What was important was that Synge was drawing on contemporary Irish life and not on myth for his subject-matter; he was yoicking the drama off its high-minded and stiff-necked plane and setting it down on its feet. Yeats' contribution both to poetry and to the drama must not be underestimated: the time, the interest and the enthusiasm that he gave to the stage were of tremendous importance to the Irish theatre; they were of tremendous importance to Synge himself. But it was Synge and not Yeats who gave direction to the native Irish drama. Though Sean O'Casey has shifted the scene from the countryside to the town: though with the troubles a passion and urgency have crept in, it is easy to see the debt which *Juno and the Paycock* owes to *The Playboy*.

Setting oneself the task of comparing two short periods of time, 1912-14 with 1934-36, imposes certain restraints which are unwelcome. For example, no play of O'Casey's falls into either period. *Within the Gates* almost comes within the latter period but not quite. And yet to discuss the drama of to-day without mentioning O'Casey is impossible: and to discuss *Within the Gates* without reference to the other plays is stupid.

The advance from naturalism to symbolism is obvious in O'Casey's work. The three early plays, *The Shadow of the Gunman*, *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars*, are all concerned with the interpretation of drama through carefully defined and recognisable human types. The two latter plays are extremely successful, straightforward, realistic dramas. But I

imagine O'Casey felt the objections which other dramatists have felt with realistic drama, that on a stage, which is in fact governed by laws entirely different from those of actual life, it is cramping and unnecessary to sacrifice stage effects in order to give the illusion of actual life. The stage, he would argue, is not in competition with actual life. It is there to give you what you don't get in actual life, not what you do. If it drops the individualisation of characters, it presents the broad human elements rather than the subtleties of human wavering, which are rather the material of the novel. Movement in the same way, ceasing to be naturalistic, can approach nearer to the mime, or to ballet. The art of the theatre, then, is that of generalisation. O'Casey's war play, *The Silver Tassie*, is a mixture of realism and symbolism. The conflict between the two methods is not resolved: nor has the dramatist mastered the poetic technique which he uses in the symbolic passages. In his last play, *Within the Gates*, these conflicting elements are resolved. The dramatist has chosen the crudest-type characters, the Prostitute, the Bishop, the Atheist, the Poet and so on. The plot is simplicity itself: The Bishop searching Hyde Park with the desire to get a contact between his religion and humanity that he has never had. The Prostitute is the child of his only indiscretion. The Bishop comes to know this; he tries to convert the girl; he fails. The girl dies; her challenge to life "Let me die dancing."

The scene is laid in Hyde Park, 'a London Park' as it is called. By an abstract technique, the reduction of character to type after the manner of a morality play, the introduction of chanted choruses, very simple and

strongly rhythmical, and simple dances executed by the singing choruses, O'Casey has succeeded in giving the sense of the crowd—the nursemaids, guardsmen, soul-saviours, economic missionaries and gardeners whose lives so curiously intermingle round Marble Arch.<sup>1</sup>

The former realism of O'Casey is still to be found in this last play. But it does not find its expression in naturalism, but in speech. The vocabulary of the poems is drawn from common speech and not from 'poetic language.'

There is no doubt that *Within the Gates* is not only the finest thing which O'Casey has written up to date, but also one of the finest plays of our time. What was its fate?

It was produced at the Royalty Theatre on a small stage, when what it needed was a large stage. Its production was amateurish (though I have little doubt that the blame of this is not to be laid on the producer, but on the fact that he could not get decent financial backing). And to watch, it was so bad in parts that I went away convinced that its faults were integral to the play. I believe that it has been revived once in England with as little success as formerly. "There you are," said the commercial theatre people, "that just shows. While he stuck to straight playwriting, O'Casey was a paying

<sup>1</sup> A couple of years after I saw *Within the Gates* performed at the Royalty, I was walking through the crowd at Marble Arch. There were the familiar sympathetic and sardonic knots around the platforms, the usual individuals arguing with one another, oblivious of the people round them, the inevitable casuals and suddenly the Salvation Army dismally striking up a hymn tune. Suddenly another tune came into my head, a light, pervasive melody that seemed to reconcile the whole conflicting movement round me. Everybody was moving to that tune. And it was not for some minutes that I realised that the music in my head was the air of the opening chorus of *Within the Gates*. The association of 'Hyde Park' came later; the evocative stimulus was the similarity of movements.

proposition. Now he's gone in for this fancy, symbolic stuff, he's just a flop."

It shewed nothing of the sort. *Within the Gates* was produced in New York with adequate financial backing. It was an enormous success and ran to packed houses, night after night. The faults which appeared to be in the play itself proved merely to be faults of production. Anyone reading the play can now see that for himself.

I have cited *Within the Gates* in some detail because it is a test-case. With many so-called highbrow plays (which means just 'plays') the complaint is raised that (1) they are limited in interest and (2) faultily constructed. In this case neither of these things were true. (If the same play succeeds in New York, and fails in London where the material is topical, it is the difference in the respective productions rather than the difference in publics that is the cause.) We are forced therefore to the conclusion that the London Theatre, when faced with a play out of the common run, is incapable of producing it properly. We are even driven to think that the better a play is, the worse mess will be made of it.

The development of a younger Irish dramatist, Denis Johnston, is similar to that of O'Casey. He has published four plays: *The Old Lady Says No* (which is out of print and which I consequently have not read); *The Moon on the Yellow River*; *A Bride for the Unicorn*; and *Storm Song*.

*The Moon on the Yellow River* seems to me, perhaps because I am not Irish, an immature and rather tiresome play by an admirer of Chekhov. I confess that I haven't seen the play acted and the sport with bicycles and the coy young girl may come across on the stage much

## THE CHANGING SCENE

better than it does on the printed page. At any rate, it was successful, commercially.

The two later plays are much more interesting. *A Bride for the Unicorn* is an attempt to get away from naturalistic drama. It was written and produced in Ireland, before Auden and Isherwood's *Dog Beneath the Skin*. Yet it shews extraordinary affinities with that play. It is as capricious with actualities: for example, a large part is taken by a Bust, which, when drunk, is capable of moving and speaking, just as in Auden-Isherwood the Dog takes a large part. There is a similar combination of verse and prose; of seriousness and plain fooling: a similar satire of institutions: and a similar obscurity of symbolism. Both plays fail broadly for the same reason, the myth is not plain, the authors have not found out how to say what they want because they are not quite sure what they want to say. Both O'Casey and Johnston, starting as straightforward naturalistic dramatists, have arrived at a very similar conception of the drama as Auden and Isherwood, who have come to the stage through poetry and fiction.

As if he realises the failures of *Bride for the Unicorn* as a whole, Johnston has returned to naturalism in his last-published play, *Storm Song*. This play, which to my knowledge has never been produced in England, is conventional in technique. (There is consequently no drawback to commercial production.) The play has humour, action, excitement and tragedy—in fact, everything you want. But it remains unperformed, while all the London producers bewail the dearth of new plays.

Before the War, with the exception of Shaw, the dramatists preserved a common front of naturalism.



## DRAMA

To-day O'Casey, Johnston, Isherwood and Auden are reaching out for a new dramatic form, operating by its own laws, rather than the laws of the actual world. The authors of *The Dog Beneath the Skin* and *The Ascent of F.6* have less theatrical experience: and as a result approach the stage with less skill and fewer preconceptions. The first play, brilliant though it was in almost every section (except where willy-nilly a dramatic high-spot was reached), was merely 'geographical' in plot. The device of a search for a missing hero was used to allow the authors to satirise one aspect of society after another. Choruses spoken from side-boxes were used to illustrate and explain the action. Many of these choruses were brilliantly written, but in idea and in execution they were fundamentally undramatic. The material they propounded was material that the dramatists were unable to make explicit in action: and in the Group Theatre production the audience was conscious always of a division between the stage and the chorus, a division that would not have been so apparent if the chorus had been present on the stage, at perhaps a higher altitude than the common players.

In *The Ascent of F.6* the authors have found a plot which contains the elements of exposition by dramatic rather than choric means. The imperial interests of Ostnia and Great Britain are in conflict over Sudoland. The Ostnians are turning the discontent of the natives against the British. A punitive expedition will not be so successful as the subtler method of conquering the mountain F.6. Propaganda has been used to make the natives believe that the man who climbs F.6 will be lord of Sudoland, he and his heirs after him.

The imperial interests are represented by Sir James

## THE CHANGING SCENE

Ransom, Prime Minister; Lady Isabel Welwyn, the romantic dupe of chivalry and patriotism; General Dellaby-Couch, the armed forces; and Lord Stagmantle, big business man and press lord. Ransom's plan is to induce his brother Michael—a Colonel Lawrence figure—a mountaineer adored by a group of unconsciously homosexual school friends, to climb F.6.

Michael Ransom is not nearly as blind to imperial trickery as most adventure-lovers of his type. He sees through his brother, Lord Stagmantle and Lady Isabel Welwyn. He knows that he is to be used and why. But he cannot resist the persuasion of his mother, who confesses that she really loved him much better than she loved his twin brother James: but for his own good she suppressed that love. She implores him for her sake to climb this unscaleable mountain. And Michael gives way.

At this point Mr. and Mrs. A. are introduced. They appear in the side-boxes, as the chorus in *The Dog*. But they do not explain what is going on on the stage. They lap up Lord Stagmantle's propaganda. They are dramatically essential to the play, because they give an entirely new element, the reaction of the public to imperial adventure. "I'm sick of the news," says Mr. A.

"I'm sick of the news. All you can hear

Is politics, politics everywhere:

Talk in Westminster, talk at Geneva, talk in the lobbies, and  
talk on the throne;

Talk about treaties, talk about honour, mad dogs quarrelling  
over a bone.

What have they ever done, I ask you? What are they ever  
likely to do

To make life easier, to make life happier? What have they  
done for me or for you?"

And at the end of the scene, Mrs. A., depressed, starved for romance, says: "Give us something to live for. We have waited too long."

Michael Ransom's ascent is to them that vicarious adventure which Andre Seligman's voyage in the *Cap Pilar* is meant to be for the readers of the *News Chronicle*.

Ransom and his friends have to make all haste, because the Ostnians are trying to make the ascent from the other side of the mountain. Their climb is represented in five scenes. At the first, they are stopping in a monastery preparatory to starting the first stage of the climb. There each climber sees his fate in a crystal, and Ransom is warned by the Abbot against his own desire for power, which has led him to undertake this climb. There is still the chance of resigning and entering the monastery. But Ransom is too implicated. The desire for followers has brought on him the responsibility of leadership. He can't let his friends down. In the second scene, we have the death of Lamp, the botanist, in an avalanche. In the third, the suicide of Shawcross because Ransom has chosen Gunn to climb the last lap with him. In the fourth, the collapse and death of Gunn through fatigue. And in the fifth, the death of Ransom himself as he gains the mountain-top.

In this last scene the confusion at the basis of the play becomes quite explicit. There are, in fact, two conflicting plots. The first plot is social. It shews the interrelation of imperialistic and business interests, the exploitation of bravery and the spirit of adventure in those interests, and, finally, the acquiescence of the public in what they imagine to be a disinterested act of bravery and their ultimate disillusionment. This is in itself quite enough to make a play. But in addition to that, the

## THE CHANGING SCENE

authors have become interested in Michael Ransom as a person. He is made twin brother to the Prime Minister, (thereby involving the authors in the difficulty of a prime minister aged 28). Michael, as has been pointed out, is much more intelligent than most athletes of his type and consequently he is not duped by political arguments, as 99 per cent. of his type would be. His reason is entirely personal, the attempt to usurp his brother's place in his mother's affection. According to this personal scheme, the identification of the mountain and the mother, the dragon of the mountain and the brother, is perfectly correct. The symbolism of Act II, Scene V, therefore does not suffer so much from obscurity as from belonging to a different play from the social play first contemplated. The moral assessment of Michael Ransom is the climax of his own tragedy, but it is irrelevant to the social tragedy involved by the utilisation of Ransom's virtues by an unscrupulous society. The Epilogue in the stage-boxes returns to the social theme, and end off the plot.

To what is this change in dramatic technique due? Why have Auden and Isherwood, Johnston and O'Casey, discarded the conventional technique? and why are they all apparently going in the same direction? It is the sheerest superficiality to view these changes as simply *pour la nouveauté*. Or yet as imitation. Changes of this sort arise as the centre of dramatic interest shifts from one subject to another. The interest has passed from the individual to society: social problems have given way to the problems of society, of men and women living in towns under a failing economic system: the assessment of alternative economic systems, fascism or communism. This is the subject of drama, of poetry and

of fiction to-day: and the correspondence in technique is due not to the imitativeness of authors, but to the similarity of their subject-matter. Four walls and a family are no longer the epitome of England. Common ideals and purposes are stronger now than ties of blood. So the sphere of creation is larger and those idiosyncrasies of character which were becoming the subtleties of art are being reduced to their proper proportion.

Three theatres have started in London during recent years, in opposition to the West End. The Group Theatre, under Rupert Doone, is probably the best known of these. The Group have produced *The Dance of Death*, by Auden; *The Dog beneath the Skin*; *Sweeney Agonistes*, by T. S. Eliot, a technical forerunner of much of Auden's dramatic verse; and a new translation of the *Agamemnon of Æschylus*, by Louis MacNeice. The Group Theatre, need it be said, has suffered considerably from lack of funds. But it has established in the minds of the public the possibility of a poetic drama, that unlike the plays of the Poet Laureate is not less but more in contact with contemporary life than prose drama. I am not a blind admirer of the Group. Much that they do seems to me ill-advised and pretentious. But they deserve patronage, not as a charity, but because they have done, and are doing, some of the only creative work in the English theatre.

More interesting, however, because more capable of development are the Left Theatre and the Unity Theatre Club. The Group has bound itself to a particular method of production, a combination of ballet, mime and acting. The Left and the Unity are founded for political reasons. These, as far as I know, are the first purely political theatres to be found in England.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

The Left Theatre is the more powerful and financially more secure. Its touring companies visit the provinces with such plays as Slater's *Stay Down Miner* and perform in local halls, where a certain number of seats are guaranteed beforehand by the local trade unions.

The Unity Theatre has a more picturesque history and existence. About six years ago, a group of English workers went to the Theatre Olympiad in the U.S.S.R. On their return they decided that if the workers could do that in Russia, they could do the same thing in England. They founded a company called the Rebel Players. They had no hall or money to hire one, so they rehearsed in attics, cellars or wherever they could find a room big enough. Then they got hold of a lorry and drove round the East End, stopping at corners, singing burlesque songs from the back of it. If it was dark, they performed in the headlights.

Authors arose, who wrote songs and sketches for them. They began to give these sketches at political meetings. This went on for some years. Most of the original members are still members of the troupe to-day; and they are the most enthusiastic. They do not plan and never have planned ahead. They are always so pressed for money that the immediate job has filled their horizon.

In July, 1935, one or two enterprising people joined the group; and in November of that year the first English performance of *Waiting for Lefty* was given.

They then rented a church hall in Britannia Street, King's Cross, redecorated it and opened it in January, 1936. In April they put on *Waiting for Lefty* and *Private Hicks* for ten performances, with great success. *Lefty*, *Hicks*, Toller's *Requiem*, and an expressionistic piece

## DRAMA

called *Newsboy* were given through the summer all over London at meetings and in small halls.

In September as many as could arrange to take their holidays at the same time went to Durham for a week's tour. (It is to be noted that the actors work at other jobs during the day and rehearsals cannot begin before eight or nine at night.) Eighteen actors hired two taxicabs and drove to Durham with all their props and scenery. The journey took twenty-five hours. Some of the men gave up their jobs to go. They slept in the open.

The tour was a tremendous success in every way, except financially. They gave performances in Sunderland and Newcastle as well as in mining towns. The miners gave them a big hand.

They returned in debt. In October they revived *Lefty* again and produced Ramon Sender's Spanish play, *The Secret*, to pay the rent. In November they paid off the debts of the tour by a ten days' run of Randall Swingler's *Spain* and the Taximen's play, *Where's that Bomb*.

The Unity Theatre Club is responsible for this last-named play. One day two men came in and said they'd never written a play, but they'd like to write one for the Unity. They were taxi-drivers. They had reviewed *Lefty* for the *Cab Trade News*. Instead of sending them away to write it, the Unity theatre people had them in to watch rehearsals, elocution classes, etc., to get the feeling of the stage. Then they went away and came back with a rough draft of the play. With two corrections, it was the final version. *Where's that Bomb* is the first English proletarian play.

These two ventures are both in their infancy: but

## THE CHANGING SCENE

that infancy is lusty. If I was asked what was the difference between the theatre of 1936 and 1912, I should say it was the difference between seeing Granville Barker's productions of Shaw at the Court and *Waiting for Lefty* at the Church Hall, Britannia Street, King's Cross.



## CHAPTER IV

### *Films*

BEFORE 1911 many fortunes had been made from films. As early as 1903 it was possible with the outlay of one hundred and fifty dollars to buy a film projector and a copy of the wonder film, *The Great Bank Robbery*. Public performances netted a thousand dollars profit a week. There was obviously money in it: and not the paltry sums gained from supplying high-priced entertainment to the rich, but the enormous fortunes amassed from the coppers of the poor. From the very start the cinema was entertainment for the masses. The film demanded nothing of its audience, except sight. The genius of Lord Northcliffe had led him to see the profit in supplying trash for the public to read. Compared with other papers, his circulation was enormous. But compared with the appeal of the film, any paper was parochial, bound as it was by the limit of literacy and language.

Like music, the film transcended national frontiers; unlike music, it needed no training to be appreciated. For Beethoven the ear must be trained; but all eyes were educated enough to understand *The Great Train Robbery*. A dislike of Beethoven is due to ignorance in the majority; dislike of *Trapped by Bloodhounds* or *A Lynching at Cripple Creek* was due to knowledge in an inconsiderable minority. The cinema did not cater for the *cognoscenti*. They already had the theatre, the ballet and the opera to amuse them. The cinema grew on the lines of the popular paper. The pennies of fifty

half-wits are fifty times better than the penny of one wise man.

Up till 1911 or so the supply of films had lagged so far behind the demand that any film was better than none. Number, not quality, was the criterion of excellence. After 1911, box-office returns came to be the test of excellence. And they have remained the test to the present time.

This system implies the expenditure of large sums in production, in order to secure a quick turnover. In an industry where technical improvement proceeds so rapidly it is not surprising that little attempt has been made to produce films which will have a long life.

It also implies that the audience by going to see one film rather than another automatically exercises a popular ballot. According to this ballot, Mary Pickford was the most popular film actress during the War, and the precocious Shirley Temple is the darling of to-day.

Where the nature of the film, rather than the personality of the actors, secures success, the order is sent through to repeat that success in four or five films of the same type. *The Great Train Robbery* immediately produced *The Great Bank Robbery*, *The Singing Fool*, a choir of braying asses.

It is a commonplace to say that film studios make, and always have made, films as factories produce canned goods, motor cars, or whatever. It is not entirely true. The life of the film industry has depended throughout on the creative ability of different producers, directors, scenarists and actors. Without the impetus given by these various creators the film industry would be dead. Imitators cannot survive unless they can have fresh things to imitate. This can be seen in the years before

## FILMS

the War, as it can to-day. The forces were at work with the old 'flicker,' as they are with the technically more perfect 'talkie.'

In Europe, with its more highly developed common culture, the story film appeared as the appropriate vehicle for reproducing stage-drama and literature. Sarah Bernhardt was filmed in her famous stage success, *La Dame aux Camélias*. She played the title rôle of Queen Elizabeth, which was bought in America by an exhibitor called Adolf Zukor. In England the Hepworth, the British and Colonial Kinematograph and the London Film Companies put forth a steady output of high quality. Italy exploited the epic, producing Homer's *Odyssey*, *The Fall of Troy*, *Faust*, *The Three Musketeers*, and, greatest of them all, *Quo Vadis*. This super 'feature' film, eight thousand feet in length, six reels with an interval between each reel to change the film, became the prototype of all super-super-films. In America, where the three-reel *Life of Buffalo Bill* had been the most pretentious production, it caused a tremendous sensation. To Adolph Zukor it made clear that the future of the film lay in the celluloid reproduction of famous actors in famous plays: a theory which he didn't abandon till he found that Mary Pickford, a small actress in minor films, was drawing bigger audiences than all his Famous Players put together. To David Wark Griffith, who himself had a love of the epic and had just finished a film about Primitive Man called *Man's Genesis*, it shewed the method necessary for the construction of his great film, *Birth of a Nation*.

Commercially, the film industry in Europe was as successful as that in America prior to the War. But

it was approaching the film with false preconceptions. It regarded the film more as a method of reproduction, like the gramophone, than as a new medium of expression with its own laws.

The Americans, not because they had any deeper technical knowledge of the film, but because they had a less cultured background, came nearer to the nature of their medium. It is true that they tried to make films like *The Tale of Two Cities* in imitation of the films that were being imported from Europe. But their mainstays were the 'Western' (Tom Mix first appearing about 1910 in *Ranch Life in the Great Southwest*) and slapstick (the first Keystone Comedy, 1912).

Drawing their material not from Homer, but from dime novels, the Westerns relied entirely on speed and action. There was no time for the delineation of character. A caption and a gesture was enough to fix each character as good or bad, and then the fantasy started. It was a cult of movement, without any regard for the significance of the movement. But it was nearer the true nature of the film than the stage convention.

What was good in the Westerns, the freedom of the camera, the speed and economy of narration, is still the merit of American films. In comparison to the silent film, the tempo of the talkies is slower. But whereas English films are still struggling with the further difficulty that speech has imposed on action, the Americans have reached the position where speech fills out action and gives it greater emotional variety.

Characterisation is still confined to types, but the range of types has been greatly increased and in the better films, the ridiculous division of characters into sympathetic and unsympathetic has been abandoned.

It is still, however, true that the cruder films, which fail in London and succeed in the provinces, are the films which make the biggest money.

In comedy also, America soon took and held the lead. Whatever their faults, the early Keystones had undeniable merits. Mr. George Seldes<sup>1</sup> writes of them thus: "The assertion of the Keystones was that the bodies of human beings lent themselves to comic exploitation, that a man sitting down on a red-hot stove and rushing thence to sit on a cake of ice, which promptly melted, could make people laugh. The Keystone did not assert that this was the only, or the most desirable, laughter in the world; it merely worked on the assumption that this was the primal, the basic or (as Mr. Nathan puts it) the belly laugh. It then asserted (not as theory, but as ordinary practise) that the lofty sentiments of humanity were also available as material for farce and roared with laughter over love, honesty, perseverance, courage and marital fidelity, never forgetting its first principle, so that the mockery of these noble virtues was always accomplished through laughter at physical effects. It made fun of pretty girls by showing them languishing for the love of mountainous fat men; it made fun of heroism by showing a cross-eyed explorer surrendering to a stuffed lion; it had no time for the deep peace of domestic bliss which it interrupted with burning toast and babes who put tacks in the soup; it was supremely contemptuous of the American legend of success—its great business men were always shysters, and the boy who made good was usually a dolt; and when the hero and the heroine embraced in the final, obligatory close-up, the Keystone leered at the new legend of movie love

<sup>1</sup> *The Movies and the Talkies*, George Seldes (Lippincott.)

## THE CHANGING SCENE

as the hero winked knowingly at the spectators and the heroine pinched his wallet."

Charles Chaplin made his first film for Keystone in 1914, one of an obscure bunch of comedians, such as Ben Turpin and Chester Conklin. To-day Chaplin is in his maturity. His own scenarist and director, he is free from the impositions of outside control. He has proved his supreme quality as an artist. But he could not have proved it unless he had amassed the capital to be independent.

Though it is a far cry from the early Keystones to the later Chaplin, a lot of common elements remain. In both the laws of cause and effect are suspended. In an early Keystone a motor car, rammed either end, shut up like a concertina but still went on working: another car, seeing a hen hatching out chickens, retired to a garage and baby cars came running out. In *Modern Times* both Charlie and the foreman, caught at different times in the cogs of machinery, pass through without the least damage.

Chaplin has discarded the cruder methods of slapstick because he doesn't need them. He is able to make the same points more subtly: and more subtly he is able to make new points—points, that is, new to slapstick, but as old to humour as Cervantes. He has made for himself a character, quixotic in the respect that his motivation is always good. It is impossible to imagine him doing a really mean or vicious action. His idealism constantly drags him into ridiculous positions. When his intentions are best, his achievement is most absurd. A red flag drops from a lorry. He picks it up to return it to its owner. A labour demonstration swings round the corner. He is arrested as a communist ringleader.

Again, everything depends on his serving a customer with a duck. The manager is angry and he has got to make good. But the dancers get up from their tables and sweep him round the room. He is carried back to the customer's table and then away again. Chaplin is always fighting against the blind, incomprehensible forces of the outside world. These forces are everything outside himself and the girl he protects; sometimes the machine to which he is fastened, sometimes the crowd, the law or the strong man. In every Chaplin film this conflict is reiterated. In most films he has even to surrender the girl who is his ally. *Modern Times* is the better for his convincingly keeping the girl and avoiding the sentimental 'laughing clown' situation.

There is almost no one who, watching Chaplin, cannot, and does not, identify himself with this figure. In laughing at Chaplin, we laugh at ourselves and our own sense of puniness. In laughing with him, at his jokes and his half-humorous, half-pathetic fantasies, we are reassured. We suffer with him and triumph with him. And finally, we realise that in all our worst blunders as in all his, we were acting from the best of motives.

Even more than to his artistry, Chaplin owes his popularity to this ease of identification. It is a different matter with the Marx Brothers. Their method derives from an extension of slapstick in another direction. The Keystone produced a fantasy world in which the ordinary physical laws were in abeyance, but emotional reactions remained qualitatively normal, though often intensified. For example, a blow on the head that would stun or kill a normal man made the clown merely totter before he retaliated with tremendous rage. The

## THE CHANGING SCENE

Marx Brothers have reversed this principle. The laws of the physical world remain unchanged, but the emotional world is turned topsy-turvy.

Groucho, Harpo and Chico each stand for different aspects of this reversal. All three are anti-social, recognising no code of social or moral behaviour. Harpo, who is dumb, is the embodiment of the sexual instinct. His reaction to a pretty girl is immediate. He chases her and there is no doubt of his intentions if he catches her. Groucho, who does enough talking to make up for the silence of a dozen Harpoes, is allowed to say anything he likes to the non-Marxist characters. He speaks like a thought sequence from *Strange Interlude*, only what he says is funny. No one is offended. He impugns their honesty, their virtue and their physical attractions, without evoking more than a slight bridling. He is always in a position of some authority—hotel-keeper, president of college, prime-minister or business manager: but he is never degraded, however flagrantly he behaves. Chico is semi-articulate. He finds the language difficult, and like the emigrant he feels that rules are only made to be avoided, contracts only framed for swindling. He has a continual sense of being 'done' and his activity is devoted to complicated and futile plots to avoid imaginary designs against him, or equally complicated schemes to accomplish simple ends. He is like the Jew in the Russian saying, who, when asked to touch his right ear, does it with his left hand round the back of the neck.

The problem of sympathy is more difficult with the Marx Brothers. There are very few civilised men who do not feel toward pretty girls they see in the street as Harpo does. But except for those who appear in the



## FILMS

courts, they all suppress this instinct. Those who feel guilt in the suppression, think that Harpo is vulgar and disgusting. His humour is repulsive. Those who acknowledge this element in themselves find amusement and reassurance in Harpo's behaviour. It is the same with the other two. We all wish to be rude, especially brilliantly rude. We are afraid of the consequences ("Never make an enemy," Mother says, "where you can make a friend"). If we admit this desire to consciousness, it is marvellous to see rudeness without the consequences. It is the same with the meanness and low cunning of Chico.

In this country, where from an early age we are taught to repress our negative and sexual emotions because they are unnatural and unchristian, the humour of the Marx Brothers is not very popular: though the humour of Walt Disney, which is of the same nature but more disguised, is entirely successful. The Marx Brothers have an enthusiastic reception in London, but in the provinces they are not very popular. Unlike Chaplin, they are not financially independent. Their last film, *A Night at the Opera*, was an attempt on the part of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to popularise their humour. The film was diluted with light opera. Chico and Harpo were made the friendly assistants of a young singer and in one part gave a concert to little children. Formerly Chico has played his piano and Harpo his harp. But they played because they wanted to play and not to delight the hearts of the progeny of emigrants. It was not a success as a film.

The story goes that after the film was made, the Marx Brothers went to see Mr. Irving Thalberg, the Napoleon of Metro-Goldwyn. They were told they

## THE CHANGING SCENE

would have to wait a long time. They went out and lit a fire under his window. After a little while, Mr. Thalberg came to the window to see where the smoke was coming from. The Marx Brothers waved to him and went away. They had done what they had come for. They had seen Mr. Thalberg.

But they are making no more films for Metro-Goldwyn.

Hollywood produces 456 films a year, that is, just under nine new films each week. Other countries produce fewer films, of which the best are better than anything that comes from Hollywood and the worst infinitely worse than Hollywood's worst. From the point of view of the British public 'films' means Hollywood. It is all very well to talk of French, German and Russian films, shewn at specialist cinemas or film societies. But these do not form the diet of the film public. Since the talkies came in, the audience is limited by language. But even before the talkies came in, it was plain that Continental films had no chance in the British market, not because they were unpopular, but because American and British capital held a monopoly of the cinemas and were determined that the public should not see these films.

Hollywood uses every device to retain hold on the popular imagination. Film journalism ignores the existence of any film industry except Hollywood and occasional references to Elstree or Twickenham. The appeals to sex, money and luxury have created Hollywood as a paradise, excelling fairy tales and social glamour. The society beauty of pre-War days has been dethroned by the film star. Servants, instead of standing

## FILMS

hours to see a peer's daughter married in St. Margaret's, flock to the cinema and watch Joan Crawford lose her virtue in a new way. In fantasy, the adolescent girl is Harlow, Gaynor or another; the boy, the intrepid Cagney or absurd Keaton.

Bishops, social workers and headmasters find in this tendency something vicious; a new vice that the films not only exploit but have invented. Before the coming of the cinema, they say, there wasn't this worship of human beings, which makes it impossible sometimes for these young people to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

This, of course, is not true. The chief change is the transference of these emotions to the films and to film-stars (it is difficult to distinguish between the fantasies woven round film plots and characters and those woven round the reported private lives of stars). These emotions were formerly projected on to plays, novelettes, stage-players and figures like Lily Langtry.

If an attack is to be made, it should be made, firstly, on the state of society where the majority of people are so downtrodden and depressed that any happiness they achieve must take the form of fantasy and not reality. But at the moment I wish to make no attack. Merely to point out that the form of popular fantasy has been diverted to the films; and, incidentally, very much increased in intensity by the vividness of the film as a medium.

Hollywood produces wish-fulfilment films of a very high technical standard. Any actor who gives an outstanding performance abroad, any foreign producer, director, camera-man or scenarist of conspicuous talent is bought up by Hollywood and set to work. Admittedly,

none of these men have been able to do their best in Hollywood. But that is not important. We are not concerned with the value of the films they would have made if they had not gone to Hollywood. The films they do make are technically brilliant, even when they are emotionally false and intellectually vapid.

The films that are important to the English public are American films. But any comparison of the film industry to-day and yesterday must take account of films made in England. For a long time we had the excuse that the War had set back the film industry in this country. Given time and encouragement, and money, our people could do as well as anyone.

Well, they have had all three: time, flattery and finance. The critics have cooed at each British film as lovingly as a mother seeing her baby take the first step. The studios are equipped as well as any studios in existence and better than most. Stars, technicians and directors are imported, while native talent is exported to Hollywood. And yet our films remain as gauche, stupid and dull as they ever were. The attempt which was made by the papers when talkies were first introduced to decry the American voice and elevate the English has completely failed. Despite all accentual difficulties, the American story film has won, because the Americans are doing exactly what our people are doing, but forty times better.

The 'genius of the British film,' Alexander Korda, stands out from the others, like a molehill among worm-casts. Korda succeeded in one or two films (*Private Life of Henry VIII*, *Catherine the Great*, and *The Ghost Goes West*) in securing an extensive audience in England and even a certain presentation abroad. Even

to secure box-office success is an achievement for an English film. And yet even this box-office success is deceptive. A box-office success in England brings in some eighty thousand pounds. That is more or less the saturation point of the home market. And when production costs go over a hundred thousand pounds, box-office success in the home market isn't enough.

Judged by the standard of Clair's other films, *The Ghost Goes West* was a poor piece of work. Judged by the standard of the better American films (*Ruggles of Red Gap*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *The Informer*, *Fury*, *Four Hours to Kill*), the rest of Korda's work is amateurish.

A large number of technical reasons have been advanced to explain the inferiority of English films. It may be true that the organisation at the studio is bad, that too much reliance is placed on stage plays and stage players and that the inspiration of English films is never England, but the imitation of foreign successes. But underlying all these faults, there is the primary error of the conception of entertainment. In the successful commercial film business the object is entertainment. But the subject is not entertainment. The subject is the film. In the case of a story film, the problem is not how to entertain people but how to put across the story as economically and effectively as possible. It is necessary to forget the object of film-making, and concentrate for the time being on the subject. 'Entertainment is not a thing that can be put on a screen. It is merely the effect that something projected on the screen has on the audience.

In English films this creative stage seems to be ignored. An enormous contempt exists for the film public. "You can't say anything you really believe," the film-men

## THE CHANGING SCENE

apologise. "The people would hate it. It would go over their heads." And then they are surprised when their films, so carefully prepared to offend no one, please no one. They feel that they are being persecuted in their own country: that their films are being boycotted merely because they are English, instead of because they are rotten.

To my mind the hope of the English film lies in *documentary*, not as some critics maintain, because documentary is a superior, purer or more creative branch of the film, but merely because the makers of documentary have more technical knowledge of the film as a medium and more liberty of expression. This, however, is a subject which I have dealt with in an earlier chapter. It is sufficient here to note that to the English public, the film is still the story film, despite the growth of News Theatres: and of the story films, the only ones that count as a formative or deformative influence are American.

## CHAPTER V

### *Broadcasting*

"Criticism is welcomed by us, if it is informed and given with an open mind. . . . The one serious and unforgivable mistake we can make is to try for a safe stagnation."—Mr. R. C. NORMAN, Chairman of the Governors of the B.B.C., at a luncheon to mark the opening at Park Royal of Waterlow & Sons' new works for the printing of the *Radio Times*.

BEFORE THE War, films may have been in their infancy as a form of entertainment, but wireless was still in the womb. Wireless was a modern miracle, a means of transmitting telegrams without cables, but nothing more. The range of wireless waves was only slightly understood: and of the experiments made in transmission across the Atlantic, the majority were failures.

The strategic importance of wireless was already realised however: and the secret history of European powers reveals the attempts of all nations to secure a network of radio stations across the world, prior to 1914. One of the first actions of the Allies on declaration of war was to silence all German stations, though of course a number of secret stations were set up in neutral territory.

Prior to the War, wireless had struck the popular imagination in two ways. The arrest of Crippen and his accomplice was due to a wireless message received in mid-Atlantic. The tragedy of the *Titanic* might conceivably have been avoided if more attention had been paid to the wireless message received, reporting icebergs ahead. In future, people began to say, scientific weather reports must make the sea safe.

This prophecy has, of course, been fulfilled. The most complex meteorological information is compiled: and

## THE CHANGING SCENE

ships and aircraft are forewarned of the weather they are liable to encounter. The compilation of weather reports has been of inestimable value to all forms of transport, to fishermen and farmers, airmen and explorers. The radio has enabled the mass dissemination of this information. It has linked the countries of the earth together: and both aided travel from one country to another and made it less necessary\* by the almost instant transmission of messages.

The 'wireless,' like the 'gas' and the 'electric light,' the indispensable furniture of more and more homes, is the smallest and probably the least useful function performed by radio: and yet the first meaning that we come to attach to wireless is that of entertainment, the programmes we hear from Broadcasting House or from abroad. And though I am going to confine this chapter to the discussion of the B.B.C., I wish the reader to bear in mind the innumerable other commercial and scientific uses of wireless.

The B.B.C. did not exist before the War. Its place in everyday life was taken by a variety of other things. The newspaper and private speech were relied on for topical information. Books took the place of 'talks,' books and periodicals and lectures. Entertainment was local—the amateur theatrical, the magic lantern, the travelling show, the circus and the fair. And as these local entertainments could not be visited every night, cards, and even conversation, were cultivated with enthusiasm. Audiences were not so sophisticated, nor yet so driven by the urge of diversion. Hobbies, the banal preoccupations of philately, butterfly collecting and pressing flowers, were considered signs of healthy extraversion. To-day, though fetichism still continues to be



fairly common among children, this desire to collect objects of small intrinsic utility and beauty is growing less common among adults. The moral virtues, implicit in collector's lust, have almost completely vanished.

These harmless pastimes, patience, botany (how many children now are encouraged to read *Common Objects of the Seashore*, *The Wild Woods*, *The Hedgerow*?) have given place to other, and often more passive, methods of killing time. Of these, radio-bibbing is perhaps the worst. The early radio sets depended upon accumulators and high-tension batteries, which had to be renewed when they became exhausted. Rather than the expense, the trouble of renewal made people go easy with their sets. They turned it on, when they wanted to listen to what was being broadcast: and they did listen, usually cursing their neighbours for oscillation and running out into the garden to see whether the aerial had blown down whenever there was a fade-out. But now that sets have been devised that run off the electric current, the wireless is kept going all day long. Housewives cook and make the beds and dust to music: and not music only. They have got now to be oblivious to subject. Music or talking, it is all the same. These radio-bibbers drink-in Cosmo Cantuar or Stainless Stephen, Beethoven or Irving Berlin with the same half-conscious thirst. They are like babies, to whom the nipple has become the milk, lying contented sucking at their dummies. But should the comforter be lost, the wireless for a moment fail, and then what a hullabaloo, what a sudden shrieking of these starved addicts! Here, no doubt, we can find parallels, the philatelist seeing his treasured triangular Cape of Good Hope mutilated before his eyes, the lepidopterist going to the drawer he

## THE CHANGING SCENE

hasn't opened for years and seeing his Purple Emperors fallen to dust, the Red Admirals a powder round their pins. Here is the parallel, that feeling, becoming blunted to the positive pride of acquisition, whether of hearing or having, is then transferred to the negative agony of losing, not hearing or not having. As children, though bored with a toy, resent another taking it, so these sound-addicts derive more pain from silence than pleasure from sound. Radio-bibbing is the new form of an old disease, an illness only made possible by the triumph of science.

But it would be unfair, grossly unfair, to attribute nothing to the B.B.C. other than making possible a new vice. Broadcasting is, as we are tired of hearing, a vast new social activity. In the space of some thirteen years an enormous organisation has been built up, providing a variety of programmes for Great Britain and the Empire. Thirteen and three-quarter hours' instruction and entertainment is broadcast every day of the week, and each day there are roughly two entirely different programmes. This works out at just under ten thousand broadcasting hours a year. For each of those broadcasting hours there has to be planning, contracting and rehearsing, the rehearsing very often taking a much longer time than the mere broadcasting. These figures are for Great Britain alone: they take no regard for Empire broadcasting, nor do they reckon in the increasing time and research devoted to television. In addition to this, the B.B.C. publishes two magazines, the *Radio Times* and the *Listener*, each with an enormous circulation, and numerous pamphlets arising from Broadcast Talks.

It can be seen from this that the mere business of organising efficiently, without consideration for policy,

is in itself enormous. Though the daily work does not have to be done at the urgent speed of a newspaper office, the steady drain on the energy of workers in Broadcasting House is more constant. During the debate on the B.B.C. charter, Mr. Lees Smith said, on the question of staff associations in the B.B.C.: "The question of staff associations leads to the continual complaint which Members have received of terrorism, favouritism, intrigue, as a means by which the internal administration of the Corporation is carried on.

"Ever since I spoke in a previous debate I have found that if I talked to any employee of the Corporation, I am made to feel as if I am a conspirator.

"I have friends of my own in the Corporation whom I have known for years and now, if I talk to them, they look around to see whether they are being followed. They warn me that I must not telephone to them because the telephone will be tapped. They tell me not to write to them in the Corporation as they are not sure that their letters will not be opened."—(Report, *News Chronicle*, December 18th, 1936.)

In answer to this speech of Mr. Lees Smith, Sir Walter Womersley, Assistant Postmaster-General, stated that "he had heard certain rumours with regard to victimisation, and he had made enquiries to get at the truth. He had discovered there was no truth in the suggestion that Mr. Pym had been side-tracked in his work" (on Staff Administration).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Womersley's statement is misleading in this respect. It may be true that Mr. Pym was not side-tracked in his work. But Sir Walter does not mention that the form in which the proposals were put to each department was, "Does any member feel that he or she personally would gain (financially or otherwise) by staff association?" The issue was thus reduced to a personal question, and anyone voting for staff association implied that he had a personal grievance against the Corporation which would be thereby benefited.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

. He was assured that the allegation that there was a check telephone system enabling conversations of the staff to be heard by third parties was without foundation.

"Nor was the statement true that correspondence addressed to members of the staff was opened except where it dealt with the business of the Corporation. No letter marked 'Personal' was opened." (Ib. id.)

There seems to me no reason to doubt either the main truth of Mr. Lees Smith's or Sir Walter Womersley's remarks. It seems more probable that there is a conspiratorial atmosphere in the Corporation, that fantasies of eavesdropping, spying and persecution are prevalent among the staff. And yet there is, shall we say, only intrigue in so far as it is started in counteraction to imagined intrigue.

A further investigation should be made, because though Sir Walter lays fears of objective persecution at rest, he gives no explanation of why these spying fantasies should arise. It is obvious that if these fantasies have no foundation in fact the cure of this state of mind will prove very much more difficult. It is not inconceivable that it is a nervous disease due either to the nature of the work or the building in which the work is done. It is possible that a certain form of persecution mania will be found to result from working in Broadcasting House: a trade disease like silicosis or pellagra.

When it was first built, Broadcasting House was hailed as an architectural triumph. The Corporation had only managed to secure a site shaped like a cock-eyed flat-iron. In order to obtain silence for the studios, they were placed in the centre of the building, without windows, but with conditioned air. The offices were placed on the outside, looking on to the street and

acting as sound-insulators. All corridors were internal. The shape and plan of the building gives visitors the impression of 'being in a ship.' There is the same lack of freshness in the air, the same sense of enclosure in the corridors and the inside rooms. There is, however, no upper deck for the workers to get a breath of fresh air. During their day's work they exist in conditions which, though they may be physically quite healthy, are psychologically abnormal.

Furthermore, any room which is used for broadcasting has a microphone connected with a listening room: and in the larger studios there are observation chambers. This means that in the small broadcasting rooms what you say can be overheard without your knowledge: and in the larger you can not only be overheard, but spied on.

These provisions are, of course, absolutely necessary for the rehearsal of broadcasts and it is extremely useful for the observers in the observation chamber to be able to discuss what is wrong with a broadcast without the broadcaster overhearing. It might be thought that the people to suffer from the fear of eavesdropping or spying would be the outside broadcasters rather than the staff. The point is, however, that the outside broadcasters do not work constantly in this atmosphere. Why should those whose profession involves spying on and listening in to other people imagine that they themselves are spied on and listened in to?

This is a common phenomenon in psychology. The Christian teaching is, "Do unto others what you would they should do unto you." The psychological mechanism, on which this is based, is that what you do unto others, or in advanced stages what you want to do unto others, is being done to you. It is the exact

## THE CHANGING SCENE

correspondence of punishment. An eye for an eye. Only in this case, it is a spy for a spy.

This theory is only put forward tentatively and may be entirely false. But it does help to explain the existence of the peculiar atmosphere of intrigue that Mr. Lees Smith and many others have observed in the B.B.C. and which Sir Walter Womersley maintains there is no objective reason for. The theory must not be objected to merely on the grounds that the staff is just doing the job that it is paid to do, and that there is no reason why they should consider this as spying. The truth is that almost everyone has strong fantasies of spying, and guilt associated with those fantasies. The mere fact that their job coincides with the fulfilment of these fantasies in a certain form will not remove the guilt in many cases: but instead the guilt will find its outlet in such a distorted form as that they themselves are being spied on.

Here, again, is what Mr. Lees Smith says: "I have friends of my own in the Corporation, whom I have known for years and now, *if I talk to them, they look around to see whether they are being followed. They warn me that I must not telephone to them because the telephone will be tapped. They tell me not to write to them in the Corporation as they are not sure that their letters will not be opened.*" To me that reads more like a passage from Phillips Oppenheim or an alienist's case-book than a description of real life.

Mr. Lees Smith goes on: "If men have that sentiment it shows that there is something very morbid, unhealthy and overwrought in the sentiment of the place. .

"This system of paternal despotism was understandable a few years ago, but now the B.B.C. is a great organisation, with thousands of officials in the country,

it has become an autocracy. It is the nearest thing to Nazi Government that can be shown."

The ideas of persecution mentioned by Mr. Lees Smith in my opinion do not originate from the autocratic government of the B.B.C. But they are aggravated by it. Even his enemies concede that Sir John Reith is a man of great organising ability and dominating personality. His faults, in fact, proceed from a strength of character, which is his chief virtue. Under his governorship the Corporation has shewn an efficiency which is recognised everywhere. Americans prefer their own system, financed by advertisers, because they maintain that more highly paid and better artistes are employed than the B.B.C. can afford. But for organisation they seem to admit that the B.B.C. is second to none. Correspondingly in England, criticism is directed more at the policy of the programmes, the percentage of time to be allotted to different material, than to the way that material is presented. Sir John Reith is, of course, responsible for the interpretation of B.B.C. policy as initiated by the Five, now Seven, Governors. Many of us disagree with that policy, as I shall discuss later. But what we chiefly dislike is the repressive nature of the internal organisation of the Corporation.

The helot class in the B.B.C. consists of the 'creative' workers. Each department has its own creative workers, whose job consists in thinking out programmes and getting the right people to do them. This involves having a number of 'contacts' (I use this terminology because the B.B.C. has taken over a large vocabulary of highfalutin words to make perfectly simple processes seem scientific and precise; all 'Contacts' means is knowing people). In practise, this 'creative' work

## THE CHANGING SCENE

consists largely in picking out what ideas submitted to you will be suitable for broadcasting and what won't.

Now supposing each department could work as a unit, taking responsibility for its actions, the job of the creative helot would be simple enough. He would discuss his ideas with his colleagues. They would arrive at a series of programmes by discussion. And very soon he would know what he could get across and what not.

But as things are, the helot has a superior, who has a superior, who has a superior, who has Sir John Reith above him. I forget how many rungs there are in this Jacob's ladder at the moment, because they are always being increased. But it's quite a number. Each of these superiors is responsible for the behaviour of his subordinates and liable to blame from above.

No statistics are published about the number of ideas strangled in Broadcasting House. But it is possible to get some idea of what happens from the analogy of the published methods of the Editors of the O'Henry Memorial Prize. Every year in U.S.A. certain judges are appointed to award prizes to the writers of the Best Short Story, or Best Short, Short Story of the year. Each judge lists these stories numerically in order of merit. Then the different lists are added together, and the one with the smallest figure wins the prize. The judges of this competition are courageous enough to list their reports, and what is noticeable is that the Best Short Story of the year is one which none of the judges considers is best: at the top of the list he has put the stories he really likes. At the bottom the stories he thinks are awful. And in the middle come the inoffensive stories that he is indifferent about. But supposing there are twenty stories, what A has put first, B has put



twentieth, and vice versa, so that the story with the lowest aggregate is one that comes fifth or sixth on each list. The effect of this method is to select not that which will give great pleasure or great displeasure, but what is inoffensive and innocuous.

In the case of the B.B.C. the method of selection is similar, except that less allowance is made for liking than for disliking: i.e. a scheme is more likely to go through if no one dislikes it than if all but one like it.

The effect of this on the staff is either to produce excessive caution, the stifling of all originality; or nervous exasperation, a neurotic attitude of revolt and insubordination. It is obvious that the man who always remains on the safe side and respects the prejudices of everyone will have less work to do. His plans will be rejected in fewer cases and he will in consequence be less frustrated as an individual than the more original worker whose ideas are more fertile and so more likely to upset the prejudices of his superiors. The nervous strain on the 'creative' worker, who is truly creative, is very high. He is in almost constant conflict with his superior and the repetition of earlier situations (for example, the conflict he is almost certain to have encountered from his masters at school) tends to reduce him to an infantile level. The absence of staff organisation, as Mr. Lees Smith suggests, makes his position even more intolerable, because there are no methods of redress other than personal expostulation, which soon singles the individual out as a malcontent or 'a dreamer.'

There are two distinct policies that a public or semi-public body such as the B.B.C. may pursue. It may take an active or a passive view of its function. It may, that is, believe that its duty is to lead public opinion, to assess

## THE CHANGING SCENE

what is good and bad in our civilisation and criticise along those lines. Or it may believe that the radio is there to hold a microphone up to nature, to reproduce every variety of opinion, good, bad, or indifferent, irrespective of value. These are the two extremes.

It is difficult to assess the exact nature of the compromise reached by the B.B.C. I have talked with many different people in the B.B.C. and with the same people on different occasions, and I've heard practically every opinion expressed. My first impression was that the higher authorities were definitely reactionary and the junior members of the staff were progressive: the resultant of these two forces appeared to me to be a woolly-minded liberalism. But I think now that this is too simple and mathematical an explanation. Variations occur in policy according to the temperaments of the workers in each department and the vigilance of the supervisors. A very strict account is kept of all letters from listeners and the results of these letters are analysed and influence the programmes. As usual, negative criticism is allowed more weight than positive. The violent objections of prejudice are more regarded than expressions of pleasure. (This is strange, because the narrow-minded are allowed the right of suppressing views they dislike; while the broadminded are not allowed to suppress prejudice they dislike. There still clings to prejudice an odour of sanctity, presumably from the fact that the Church endorses practically every hypocrisy, superstition and pathological prejudice found in our society. The argument is still considered valid. "This public course of action cannot be taken because many good people believe it to be wrong." The converse is never used. "This public course of action must

be taken because many equally good and infinitely wiser people believe it to be right.")

Pursuing their policy of giving offence to no one, if possible, the B.B.C. authorities have arrived at the delightful conclusion that in any controversial matter, both sides of the question must be voiced. This leads to a number of absurd situations. For example, the assumption that any controversial matter has two sides and only two sides is in itself ridiculous. Take, for example, two questions that the B.B.C. lists as controversial, blood-sports and pacifism. The two sides to the blood-sport question are supposed to be "Blood-sports are cruel" and "Blood-sports are not cruel, but jolly good fun. The fox enjoys it just as much as the huntsmen, by God." What happens to Professor Flügel then? Professor Flügel has taken up no moral attitude with regard to this burning topic. As a psychologist, he is interested in the extraordinary passion shown in discussions of blood-sports: the humanitarian fury of people, who prove very often indifferent to greater tragedies, such as war, flood, pogrom, massacre and typhoon. He is also interested in the ritual aspects of the hunt, such as the bleeding of the fox. Professor Flügel is outside this controversy: he wants to explain why both sides behave as they do. Then, who is to oppose him? Certainly not the humanitarian, nor the foxhunting man: because they both agree to the extent that they consider it a moral question. Possibly an economist ought to be brought in to oppose an external social explanation to this internal, psychological argument. But that doesn't happen in the B.B.C. Fox-hunting is controversial: therefore there are two sides to the question and only two sides.

Again, with pacifism, what are the two sides? I shall not fight for my country under any circumstances, or my country, right or wrong? But what about these other attitudes? I shall not fight in any aggressive war. I shall not fight for any national ideal, but I am prepared to support the League of Nations with armed force. Or, finally, I will not fight in any capitalist war, but I will fight for democracy against fascism, and that fight will be against fascists and capitalists irrespective of nationality.

The impartiality of the B.B.C., airing both sides of the question, is in effect a suppression of all but two sides, the positing of false dilemmas.

But the objections do not stop here. Any side reference to a controversial subject in a wider context must be suppressed unless the opposite point of view can also be expressed. For example, it would be possible, not improbable, in a discussion of the Aggressive Instinct to refer in one paragraph to blood-sports and in the next to pacifism: one's attitude to killing animals being after all not wholly divorced from one's attitude to killing human beings. But this conjunction would disrupt the B.B.C., because here are two entirely different controversies each of which has to be threshed out afresh each time they are mentioned.

Hitherto I have only dealt with those situations arising from considering certain subjects controversial. But, as a matter of fact, there is practically no subject which is not controversial. The interpretation of public affairs, past and present, is controversial, the imperialist explanation being entirely different from the Marxist. But in these cases the public is only given the official, imperialist, point of view. From this, and from the

B.B.C.'s insistence on presenting both sides in their official controversies, the public is led to believe that there is, in fact, only one point of view.

Things are as they are, because that is how our Governors want them to be. The above analysis of the B.B.C. talks policy shews quite clearly that the B.B.C. is not concerned with informing the public what opinions are held, what attitudes are possible to public affairs and social questions, but with giving the appearance of impartiality to cloak their propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

There is always a danger that, however carefully it is planned what should be said to the great public, somebody will blow the gaff. Early in December of 1936, for example, we English listeners were switched over to the Geneva observer, to hear what was going on at the League of Nations. Geneva is a long way from England, and observers are liable to lose touch. In this case the observer described Señor Del Vayo's speech to the League protesting, firstly, against the Non-intervention Pact, and, secondly, against the fact that once it was applied, it was applied unevenly to the disadvantage of the democratically elected government. The British proposal to use the International Relief Society to evacuate Madrid, went on the observer, was causing some dismay and amusement, since the Society had been founded by Italian capital mostly, for the relief

<sup>1</sup> It may be objected that the number of Marxists in this country is so negligible that their point of view does not deserve expression. This argument depends on the assumption that the value of ideas lies in the number of people who hold them. The Communist Party does not publish its figures of membership, but the circulation of the *Daily Worker* is 58,000. I have no statistics of the number of people who hunt foxes and stags in this country, but I think that the number of people who have both the time, money, and inclination for this form of diversion is smaller than that. This might almost lead one to the conclusion that the B.B.C., that great voice of the public, was really the still, small voice of a privileged class, amplified in the control room.

of distress caused by flood, earthquake and other natural disasters. It had never been used in the case of war and its resources were so small that it could be of comparatively little use. At this point the Geneva observer was cut off in the middle of a sentence. It may be that, when he wrote his report, he forgot to end the sentence. Or it may be that the B.B.C. made a mistake and thought he had really finished. But whatever the cause was, the result was that the cut-off prevented the observer from putting his foot in any further. Major Tryon, in his speech in the House on December 17th, said, "The Government has decided that there might be circumstances under which it may be necessary to stop a broadcast and not to say why it was stopped." Perhaps this was a case.

This statement by the Postmaster-General needs closer examination. It prescribes a course of action in cases where the normal methods of suppression have failed. Propositions put up to the B.B.C. are examined and one of the tests of suitability to which they are submitted is whether it is to the interests of the governing class that the proposed questions should be raised. Obviously this is a difficult question to decide. Where discontent is local, it is better to ignore its existence altogether. But when it is widespread, the cleverer method is to voice the discontent and then produce the impression that what the Government is doing is adequate to allay the unrest. Programmes are arranged some weeks ahead and with the speed at which crises develop to-day, it is not always possible to gauge in advance what subjects will be safe in six weeks' time. It is for this reason that the suppression of broadcasts has been made legitimate. So that, while this appears to be an invasion of the rights of free speech,

it is in fact merely the extension of a process of censorship that has always been in force.<sup>1</sup>

The most important sociological change wrought by Broadcasting House is not to be found in educational talks, concerts or radio drama. These are substitutes for other forms of entertainment or instruction. The school, the night-class, the gramophone and piano, the travelling repertory or stock company were able to supply these demands. Admittedly the quality was not always so high nor the quantity so great. But the energy demanded from the public was greater and in consequence the enjoyment keener.

The "relaying" of public events, however, is a state activity new to social life. However great the pomp or genuine the rejoicing at the Coronation of George V, the actual ceremony remained localised. The importance of the ceremony was greatest in the Abbey and along the Coronation Route. Beyond, in the slums and the suburbs, in provincial towns and country villages, the event remained distant, admittedly not so distant as the Coronation of Edward VII because of the cinema and the superior reproduction of photographs in newspapers, but in comparison with the Coronation of George VI, broadcast from start to finish and heard by millions all over the world, very distant and local.

<sup>1</sup> This argument is not so naïve as to protest against the governing classes using in so far as they can those very methods of mass delusion which they expose in other countries. It is merely to bring this conviction to my readers, so that they may be prepared at the present for official distortion, and in those very times of emergency for which the new bill has made provision, they may be equipped to resist the flood of propaganda that will be let loose. The General Strike of 1926, during which the radio was commandeered in order to spread false news to break the solidarity of the strikers, has already given us a lesson, from which it is our fault if we cannot learn. If there were further need for instruction, the use of wireless during the fascist invasion of Spain, both in Spain itself and on the Continent, provides the final example.

"Relaying" has extended and made vivid a large number of public events, connected either with sport or with the state. The appeal to sport has been increased by commentaries many of which have been extremely thrilling. And this interest is extended to state events.

It must be noticed, however, that the "relaying" is of different kind for these two types of broadcast. In the case of a sporting event, the commentator must observe strict impartiality. He is there to say what is going on, creating the scene as vividly as he can in words and giving his own views as a sport expert, as to the conclusion. Even then he has to be very careful. In a recent prize fight, the effect of the commentary was so to emphasise the good points of one boxer that when the verdict was awarded to the other on points the impression on the listener was that the verdict was unfair until he realised that the commentary had been too enthusiastic for one contestant.

The essential difference between a "sport" and a "state" relay is that the commentator of sport does not know beforehand what is going to happen or what attitude he must take up, whereas the "state" commentator knows almost exactly what will happen and quite exactly what attitude he must adopt.

I pointed out above the influence that news films had because of their apparent truth to life: a chosen sequence joined to chosen sentences and the audience feels that it has really "experienced" something. The same is true of broadcast commentaries. Even the word "relay," used merely to indicate the process by which the commentary is transmitted to Broadcasting House and then retransmitted to the world, has taken on in the public mind a wider meaning. A superstitious belief, like that



concealed in the boast of the newsreel that "brings the world to the world," exists that the *actual event* is being sent over the ether. This belief is of course rejected as soon as it rises to consciousness; but in most people, it does not reach consciousness.

The broadcast of the Coronation provides an excellent example of the discrepancy between actual fact and commentary. The commentators were assembled some days before the Coronation and were rehearsed; that is to say, without seeing the coronation they described what they were going to see. In the case of a sporting event, such a rehearsal would have been impossible. But with any state event—and especially with one in which public feeling was as divided as this—the commentary was decided not by fact but policy. So the commentators turned up days beforehand and said their parts. Most of them did it well—from a propagandist point of view. There was of course an exaggerated obsequiousness, such as we have come to expect from B.B.C. descriptions of royalty. There was the prodigality of superlatives, which left one unfortunate commentator when the King and Queen did arrive, floundering with "Here come the King and Queen. They're incredible." But on the whole, listeners-in were more impressed by the Coronation broadcast than those who had been urged to arrive at six o'clock, when they could have turned up four hours later, were by the procession itself. The discrepancy between listening-in and seeing was revealed by these same listeners watching the coronation film of the Abbey service. Despite all feelings of loyalty and broadcast awe, they broke into hysterical laughter. The spell of monarchy woven by the commentators was broken by the sight of a nervous

king, dressed and undressed like a great doll, by princes trying not to tread on their robes and the eccentric shapes assumed by the bodies of our rulers in full dress. The propagandists had made a blunder, which by skilful cutting they have tried to remedy. But the true lesson is that Coronations should be heard and not seen. Whereas before the pageantry of pomp was of chief importance, to-day it is superseded by the broadcast description of that pageantry. The material world has given place to the etherial.

And now for the future. Television has become a practical possibility. The prices for sets are still fantastically high: The G.E.C. are offering two models for sale—one at 95 gns., the other at 120 gns. The range is limited to twenty-five miles. All branches are still in an experimental stage and no decision has yet been made between the advantages of the Baird system and Marconi-EMI. Studios of each type have been equipped at Alexandra Palace.

Gerald Cocks, in the *Radio Times*, October 23rd, Television Number, 1936, wrote: "We think we know what an ideal television service should (and eventually will) be like; but we also know that for many years at any rate that standard cannot be achieved, and suspect that when it can, many of those responsible for the early efforts will be in their graves.

"A good deal has been written, not always accurately, about plans for the trial period. Instead of going into all that again I shall try to suggest the trend of television in an unpredictable future, when screens are enlarged and brightened, and the service area covers the country; when 'outside' broadcasts by television are everyday occurrences and perhaps colour transmissions are practicable.

"That television will by then have profoundly affected broadcasting as we understand it to-day, even were a combined service not yet in being, is, I think, quite certain. Let us then look forward into time, when the majority of homes or community viewing-rooms throughout the country will have their television screens of not less than 24 inches by 18 inches. We are entitled to imagine that programme hours would still be few,—perhaps four a day,—and that they would be confined to events of outstanding interest and entertainment value, for television will, I think, mean the end of 'background' listening. For my part, I anticipate some such arrangement as three fixed hourly periods, with a 'floating' period for important outside events taking place outside the regular service programme hours.

"Thus, for vision and sound. But it may be that 'background' entertainment in sound only will continue to be broadcast at less important times. That would mean a combined service with a limited number of peak programmes, backed up by ordinary sound programmes broadcast on the normal television sound waves."

The writer then goes on to outline the type of material suitable for televising. Topicalities, news service illustrated with films, stills and personalities, supplemented by explanatory commentary. For which latter, charts, plans, and diagrams would be used. Special news items such as sporting events and ceremonials. Documentary films. Illustrated talks. Drama, the possibility of a national theatre working in conjunction with B.B.C. ? Excerpts from plays just beginning. Full performances of plays just coming off. Variety turns. Presentations of symphony orchestras.

Mr. Cocks sees the future of television not so much

in films, which he calls 'canned television' just as gramophone records are canned sound, as in direct, personally viewed programmes. "I believe," he says, "viewers would rather see an actual scene of a rush hour at Oxford Circus directly transmitted to them than the latest in film musicals costing £100,000." The cartoon, on the other hand, he thinks has a future in television. (This is probably because the cartoon makes no pretence to actuality and so there is not the unconscious sense of being swindled that you get with the televising of an actuality film.)

But this is the future. This is what the B.B.C. Director of Television is looking forward to. It will, I'm sure, be in the best of taste, whatever of his dreams are realised or unrealised. Not this year, or next year, will you and I see it, unless we go to Radio Olympia. But supposing that we had the 95 guineas necessary for the purchase of a television apparatus, I am sure that we should be often delighted, often bored. But we should never, thank God, have our susceptibilities upset, unless we were foolish enough to value truth higher than tact. And who would demand of this great public institution so dynamic a thing as truth? No one except the idiot who can't tell the difference between a stimulant and a sedative.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Fiction*

IT IS NO USE regarding literature as a wild flower of the imagination, a flower that merely by chance may be a rose, poppy or dogwort. It is no use thinking that the covers of a book enclose a world without relation to our world of living.<sup>1</sup> Those phrases that run so slickly off the reviewer's typewriter, "world of imagination, of delicate beauty," and the rest, are applying to unreal writing standards equally unreal. If we are to understand literature, and understanding is one of the conditions of appreciation, we must approach it first with some knowledge of the author, his public, and his time. Works of art, like babies, don't grow on gooseberry bushes.

English writers before the War, whether they were poets, novelists or essayists, were writing for a middle-class public. Their assumption, which was probably correct, was that the people who would buy and read their books were people with moderate or large incomes, with a sense of security, and a private education. Admittedly, "servants' literature" was produced, as it is to-day. But these productions were deliberate money-making propositions, for which the authors would be the last to claim the slightest literary merit.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ford Madox Ford told me that Charles Garvice had worked out his howlers scientifically. Ford read one of Garvice's novels, in which he was interested, because Garvice had not written it but had given Ford's ex-secretary fifty pounds to write it. When he saw Garvice, he asked him how the book had sold. "Not badly," Garvice said; "sold six hundred." Meaning six hundred thousand. "What I couldn't understand," said Ford, "was how you let through those two frightful mistakes my girl made. The heroine married a commoner in the third chapter and a viscount in the fifteenth." "That wasn't her mistake," answered Garvice. "I did that. You see, she was divorced in between. But my readers don't like that, so I left it out." "Well, what about the man who was promoted from colonel to major?" "Same thing," said Garvice. "My public don't know anything about the Army, but they do know that major means 'greater.' So, if you're promoted, your rank must be major."

## THE CHANGING SCENE

There was no serious literature, apart from pamphlets and books on economics, written for the working class. The division was clear between the artist and the worker. The artist either took up the position of being aloof from his own class, a lonely but picturesque individualist, or he lined up and backed the old tradition.

Even a writer like Lawrence, whose roots were in the working class, was separated from his origin. He tried to make the social adjustments necessary to align himself with the middle class. But he failed. He couldn't do it, could not accept their conventional standards any more than he could those of his Nottinghamshire mining village. He was thus forced to an alliance with a non-existent aristocracy, an aristocracy of blood, with himself to conduct the blood tests. Constantly through his letters we find him trying to project on to the people whom he met a sense of values which they did not possess. And then he grew impatient and accused his friends of treachery, because they were what they were and not what he had pretended them to be.

Education and culture were easy to understand before the War. They meant what you learnt at school—Greek and Latin, Shakespeare and Lamb, Keats, Shelley and Pater. They meant, if you were frightfully advanced, Ibsen, Chekhov, Brieux, Marinetti and Shaw. But whether your authors accepted or rejected conventional standards, the appeal was to the middle class. You thoroughly disapproved of the middle classes: you called them philistine, suburban, snob-ridden. But it was to the middle class that you appealed to overthrow the middle class. And when you ranted against that class, it was because you thought that the upholders of

culture were betraying their trust. H. G. Wells, imbued with the hatred of the working class which is the first investment of the lower middle class, looked on the middle middles and the upper middles with enormous reverence. The startling thing is that he still does so, now that his royalties have raised him to those heights. But perhaps this means that he had stopped looking at others and now looks in his glass. Galsworthy looked at them with less reverence. There was something wrong, he couldn't help thinking, something very, very wrong. But he got no further. Then he thought of those other cads and, by God, they made his blood boil. *Old English*, that was the stuff for Galsworthy, the grand old man with a couple of bastard grandchildren and a pile of debts, and an upstart cad wants to foreclose on the old fellah. But, by God, the old fellah does that cad down. He does as dirty a bit of work to get money as you could find outside the Stock Exchange or politics (but it's for the kiddies' sake, of course), and then he eats and drinks himself dead. There's pathos, the naughty old swindler, but so charming, so perfectly the part for George Arliss, committing suicide in the gay old, two-bottle, seven-course way.

That was the choice before the War, stick by your class or leave it alone altogether and go, live in an ivory tower. Galsworthy stuck by his class. Wells stuck by the same class, holding a watching brief for the petty bourgeois, who got educated. Hardy gave up writing novels altogether and so became a classic twenty years before he died. Henry James pursued subtleties of his own invention across the Old World and called it the International Subject. Conrad kept very clear of man's life in a modern community and instead pitted him not

only against the actual forces of nature but also against the bogeys of super-nature, buffeted him 'with all the winds of heaven and of rhetoric. Ford Madox Ford, who has never received the recognition he deserves, was then setting about his job with a workmanlike courage that upset J.G. in Harold Monro's progressive *The Poetry Review*. "On the one hand we have our friendships," Ford wrote in *The Critical Attitude*, "on the other our quarrels: on the one side are our preferences and hopes, on the other our vision of things as they are. For nothing is more difficult, nothing is more terrible than to look things in the face . . . and yet, if we have consciences, we must seek to perceive order in this disorder, beauty in what shocks us, and premonitions of immortality in that which sweeps us into forgotten graves." "Our very divinity," comments J.G., "our very divinity is threatened by this inquiring, destroying angel who is ever ready to pass, like wild fire, through our rose-garden of illusion, and make of its place the old elemental wilderness."

This passage from Ford and J.G.'s comment are illuminating. I will not say that even after the death of Gerald Gould there are not certain reviewers capable of producing passages like this rose-garden of illusion. But this review appeared in what was an *avant-garde* paper, not the equivalent of the Book Society News.

Consequently, we can see the work to which writers like Ford and Joyce and Lawrence and Maugham were addressing themselves. Break down sexual and religious tabus, expose hypocrisies, snobbery and false idealism. Release the individual and he will come through all right. Man's chains were moral and psychological, not economic.

The subject-matter of the novelists, who were opening



up new ground, was the study of the individual, the analysis of his consciousness and, later, of his unconscious. The novelists were working along the same lines as the psycho-analysts, at first independently and later borrowing from the concepts of Freud and the seceding therapists, Adler and Jung.

This does not mean that the study of the individual was the most important subject in pre-War England. It means merely that to writers, springing from the comfortable middle class, this was the subject that engrossed them. Politics were for politicians, or for writers like Belloc and Chesterton, Galsworthy or Wells—chaps who were not real artists, not pure artists. In *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus is asked by McCann to add his signature to a petition for disarmament, arbitration in cases of international dispute and socialism.

"The affair doesn't interest me in the least," said Stephen wearily. "You know that well. Why do you make a scene about it?"

"Good!" said McCann, smacking his lips. "You are a reactionary, then?"

"Do you think you impress me," Stephen asked, "when you flourish your wooden sword?"

"Metaphors!" said McCann bluntly. "Come to facts."

"Stephen blushed and turned aside."

I am not decrying the work of the pre-War novelists. A period which produced *The Old Wives Tale*, *Mr. Kipps*, *Of Human Bondage*, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Sinister Street*,<sup>1</sup> vol. I, is not a

<sup>1</sup> The success of both volumes of *Sinister Street* at Oxford at their time of publication is still commented on as extraordinary. *Sinister Street* is, of course, the life-story of the typical young public-school and university man of that time. Prettiness and sentimentality are Mackenzie's vices; but they seem to me less out-of-place in the school passages than in the subsequent portion. But my judgment of this may be biased from having been at the same school and boarding-house as that described in the book.

period to be decried. We shall be lucky if out of the spate of novels published to-day, so many English novels will be found to survive. It is merely my wish to make definite the limitations of subject that novelists were placing upon themselves and the ways in which subject-matter has changed.

In this gallery of literary craftsmen H. G. Wells felt out of his depth. He listened to Ford and Conrad talking about technique; Bennett, soaked in French novels and spattering little bits of French about for swank; Stephen Crane, slaving for Art for its own sake. He met them all and it made him feel uncomfortable. He didn't feel about writing that way. It was hit or miss. You sat down and wrote, just like you stand, warming your bottom at the fire, and talk. Every now and again a good phrase comes to your tongue, a happy expression to your pen. That's how writing was with Wells. He was a journalist, he decided.

But what had really happened was that Wells had dimly seen something new. Coming fresh to the literary racket, he knew he had something to say which the others did not dream of. He tried to define it in a rhetorical paper which he delivered to 'The Times' Book Club.

"We (novelists) are going to deal with political questions and religious questions and social questions. We cannot present people unless we have this free hand, this unrestricted field. What is the good of telling stories about people's lives if one may not deal freely with the religious beliefs and organisations that have controlled or failed to control them? What is the good of pretending to write about love, and the loyalties and treacheries and quarrels of men and women, if one must not glance at those varieties of physical temperament and organic quality, those deeply passionate needs and distresses, from which half

## FICTION

the storms of human life are brewed? We mean to deal with all these things and it will need very much more than the disapproval of provincial librarians, the hostility of a few influential people in London, the scurrility of one paper and the deep and obstinate silences of another, to stop the in-coming tide of aggressive novel-writing. We are going to write about it all. We are going to write about business and finance and politics and decorum and indecorum, until a thousand pretences and ten thousand impostures shrivel in the cold, clear draught of our elucidations. We are going to write of wasted opportunities and latent beauties until a thousand new ways of living open to men and women. We are going to appeal to the young and the hopeful and the curious, against the established, the dignified and defensive. Before we have done, we will have all life within the scope of the novel."

This statement is characteristically vague. Wells, who prides himself on 'precise' statement, is in fact only a neat thinker, who imposes on the world an order which is unnatural to it. Nevertheless, there are many writers of the present day who would agree to Wells' statement, made precise in the words of Jules Romains, who wrote in the Introduction to his *Men of Good Will*:

"What I see before my eyes is life in the twentieth century, our own life as modern men. I face the fact that this life of ours is very difficult to group around any central character; that, indeed, it obstinately refuses to be so grouped; and that it refuses to be so much more than used to be the case. A century ago it may not have been absurd to make the whole life of a city like Paris gravitate around a single individual, and associate everything with the experiences of one man. To-day, in my belief, it would be rather ridiculous.

"I also face the fact that, in the world as I see it, families are not of very much importance. They are in certain cases; but they are not in the common run of life. One can—indeed one should—find a place for them in the picture. But confining oneself to depicting a family is not painting the present-day scene, nor is it interpreting its spirit.

"For all this I am not responsible. You may regret the strong

## THE CHANGING SCENE

factor of unity, strong and simple—which a central character, or at most one family, imparted to a work of fiction. I regret it myself. But it is a question of making up our minds whether we prefer a factor of unity or the living truth in our picture; or, to put it better, whether we propose to hold on at any price when we are depicting the world that we have before our eyes, to a treatment of perspective which has become inadequate.”

A comparison of these two passages shews that while the two writers broadly agree on aims, Wells writes as a ‘thinker’ without relation to his medium, Romaine as a craftsman, concerned with the problems imposed by his task.

H. G. Wells has never been a craftsman. He arrived at his position by assimilating ideas. Ideas are magic to him. They mean enlightenment, fame and money. He has never got down to the application of those ideas to people. He does not, perhaps cannot, think in terms of human beings. They are just lumped together and generalised as ‘humanity.’

Consequently, though Wells had in some ways a clearer idea of the course that should be taken by novelists than his contemporaries, he has never been able to express himself in fictional terms. As a novelist, I regard my trade as very valuable for this reason. The novel is closer to life than any other form of writing. Philosophical, political and economic books attempt to explain principles discoverable in living: they are valuable because they enable us to understand the anatomy of life, life halted and dissected. But the novel is much closer to life. It enables us to feel and to understand the physiology of life, life moving and changing, the interaction of human beings, and the interaction of their emotions, their desires, frustrations and ambitions. If we read an economic textbook, we

may understand how capitalist society works. But the purpose of the novelist is to show it working.

Wells never did that. He had neither the tools nor the imagination to do it. The nearest he got was to talk about it, to introduce interminable, and it must be admitted rather muddled, discussions of social, religious and political problems into the body of his work. His contemporaries, devoting themselves to the study of the individual, were on safer ground. They wrote better novels than Wells. They knew their trade better. But nevertheless the credit is due to Wells that he foresaw the course that novelists would have to take, although he was unable to take it himself.

During and after the War the novel pursued its analytical course. Disclaiming all political<sup>1</sup> responsibility, the artist, turned pure æsthete, indulged his self-pity by introspective caricatures of himself in arms against an insensitive world.

These post-War writers were not happy. Their favourite theme was Futility, or the inability of the self-conscious man to integrate his personality, to feel fully without the jeering inhibition of his mind.

"Between the emotion and the response  
Falls the shadow."

As T. S. Eliot wrote in *The Hollow Men*.

<sup>1</sup> It is important to notice the change that has taken place in this word 'political.' For the post-war writer, political meant party politics—liberal, labour or conservative. The identity of all these parties in power was enough to reduce anybody of intelligence to despair. To-day, however, 'politics' have taken on a much wider meaning. Political writers are not concerned with "2d. off tea and 1d. on beer." They are concerned with the whole structure of society, the fundamental issues of socialism, capitalism and fascism, the inability of either of the last two to deal with internal organisation to avoid unemployment or external organisation to avoid war. The same issues were of course at stake before the War and up to the depression, but the bourgeois writer was not touched so personally as he has been in recent years.

This period will be seen in historical perspective as the collapse of the bourgeois intelligentsia, their rejection of their own class and their inability to link up with any other. All that was left for them to do was to ring the changes on the theme of impotence. Lawrence became more and more violent in his attacks on sexual impotence and more and more lyrical in his descriptions of potency. Huxley, who had struck his note in *Chrome Yellow* with " 'A bicycle ! A bicycle !' he cried, fancying himself a man of action," went on striking it again and again more impatiently. And the rest of them, Gerhardi, Michael Arlen, Rosamond Lehmann, all concentrated on a small clique of dilettantes with private incomes and an erotic itch that couldn't be satisfied. Noel Coward, perhaps, reached the highest point of this inverted sentimentality with his harsh, sloppy social dramas. "It's no good, Nothing's any good. Let's go to bed, because bed's no good, but it's braver to go to bed together than separately."

The depression hit these authors bang in the midriff; and it's interesting to see what has happened to them. The witty Gerhardi has turned spiritualist. The brilliant B. Nichols has found (1) Pacifism, Mother Love in a gas-mask; (2) the English countryside, the beauty of pansies in a rural setting; (3) God; and (4) the Holy Land (there are weeds growing in the Garden of Gethsemane). Huxley has turned to a form of non-violence, which will be discussed later. Eliot has found comfort in Royalism, Catholicism and Classicism, with a side-interest in Social Credit. And Noel Coward has, of course, discovered the English People, the great pageantry of England. They've all come down from their ivory towers and linked themselves up with one

group or other. Admittedly some of these groups live in ivory tenements, so to speak, shelters for many escapists instead of one. But the change has taken place. They are no longer alone.

By 1936 the situation had become very clear. The pressure of economic and political struggle in the world at large was having its effect on literature. Writers were dividing into three camps: those who openly advocated fascism, the most conspicuous of whom was the reactionary Wyndham Lewis; those who still hoped that it was possible to maintain capitalism in this country without resort to fascism; and those who, realising the political and economic situation of Europe, identified themselves with the working-class movement for international socialism.

The new and characteristic development of our time is the growth of a proletarian literature. The early proletarian efforts, such as Robert Tressall's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, were crude, sentimental and bad, judged either as novels or propaganda. But to-day the conception of proletarian literature has changed. Lessons have been learnt from the past. "Sloganismus," the vice of earlier work, has been dropped. It is realised that the nature of capitalism is such that the most objective account of people living under it provides a condemnation of capitalism in itself. The persistence of popular support for capitalism depends, in fact, on popular ignorance of its methods of working.

The proletarian novel, which is now coming into existence, is not proletarian in the sense that it is necessarily written by a proletarian, or even about proletarians, but in the sense that it is written for

proletarians. In a pre-revolutionary society, such as England, its scope is not limited to militant revolutionary activity. Strikes, demonstrations, party work may, and probably will, form an element in such novels. But the whole life of England, the life indeed of the whole world, is there as the subject-matter of the revolutionary novelist. He is not more limited but less limited than the capitalist novelist, because there is nothing that he needs to reject. What distinguishes him from capitalist novelists is that he has a greater discernment and understanding of interrelations that are not recognised by non-revolutionary writers. He does not emphasise these by any didactic method. He shews instead those principles at work, with all their psychological concomitants, that economists and politicians are forced to describe in general terms.

Whereas the bourgeois novelists have been driven to the pursuit of the abnormal, the perverted or the minute, in order to find fresh material, the revolutionary is concerned with the normal and typical in his portraiture of society as a whole. This simplification of character would no doubt shock a Proustian, at least at the outset. But the process is easily understandable. Proust submits his characters to microscopic examination, because his subject is the individual: and the subtler and more minute the analysis, the more accurate it will be. The revolutionary novelist, on the other hand, has to look at the world through the wrong end of a telescope, if he is to comprise his whole subject, society. Otherwise he will lose his proportion. Character at this range loses much of its subtlety; instead of those tantalising internal struggles, we see the broad outline of lives. We see people in terms of loyalty, courage, integrity, intelligence



and their opposites. Instead of the carefully particularised individual, round whom the world lurks, like shadows round a camp-fire, the stream or mass is important to the revolutionary, from which mass now one person, now another is picked out not in contradistinction from the others but as their examples. It is true to say that the bourgeois novelist is interested in what distinguishes his characters from other men, the revolutionary in what unites them. This is not due to poverty of imagination on the part of the revolutionary, but to richness of subject. It is the bourgeois novelist who has to wring the last drop from his fetichists and urnings.

An adverse critic might object that in this case the revolutionary novelist was reverting to a false simplicity, treating the complex structure of man altogether too superficially. But though this method of treating people is simple, it is not falsely simple. However complex individuals may be, regarded from within, whatever excuses may exist for conduct in infantile fixations, the conduct of those individuals when viewed in a social context must be judged simply. Treachery and loyalty, cowardice and courage, lying and honesty, weakness and strength, these are the vices and virtues of men and women in their relations to one another. Revolutionary literature is objective, is classical in its interest in the type rather than the exception, is epic in its direct approach to life. It is simple, but it is not falsely simple in the way that Linklater's *Men of Ness* is or Oscar Wilde's *Fairy Stories*.

Well, who are these novelists? What are we to read? Do they conform to what you have said?

This revolutionary movement is a world movement.

Its writers come from every country and they speak to the people in every country. In England there are the writers of *New Writing*: Ralph Bates, Isherwood, John Sommerfield, Halward, George Orwell, Storm Jameson, Naomi Mitchison. They don't all write well. They are in different stages of development. But they are going some place. They are interesting.

There are André Malraux, Mulk Raj Anand, the Chinese revolutionary writers translated by Edgar Snow in *Living China*. Ignazio Silone, the Italian exile, the expelled Germans and the American novelists, Dos Passos, Halper, Caldwell, Cantwell, Josephine Herbst and Waldo Frank.

All over the world new writers are arising who identify themselves with the revolutionary movement against fascism, and old writers—Gide, Rolland, Romain—coming to the same conclusion. In America, in 1935, American revolutionary writers held a congress to discuss their problems and to arrive at some means to market their work so that it reached the people for whom it is intended. (It's no use writing a novel for workers and then have it marketed at two dollars fifty.) As a result of this congress, the American Book Union was formed to be able to guarantee a sufficiently large initial public to make it possible to issue a book at a price like fifty cents.

In imitation of this idea, Victor Gollancz started his Left Book Club. The object of this book club was primarily to supply the public with non-fictional political literature at a very reduced price. In under a year the membership of the club had grown to 40,000 and it has not nearly reached saturation point.

It would be foolish to maintain that the Left Book

Club does, or can, supply all the literature necessary to the working class. I don't wish to say that. Its importance is that it is consolidating and spreading the public for revolutionary literature of every type. No publisher has ever tried to tap this public before. They have believed that what kept the working class from reading anything but thrillers was ignorance and not costliness. Gollancz has disproved that. He has made little concession in his choice of books. Few of them are easy reading. But the result has been not a falling off in membership, but the formation of innumerable groups for the discussion of each book as it has come out.

Hitherto writers have felt cut off from a working-class public. "We have to write," they have said, "not for those whom we would like to read our books, but for those who can afford to." Even to-day they have a knowledge that the majority of their readers will belong to the middle class. But an ever-growing section of that middle class is coming to see that its interest lies ultimately nearer to the working than to the ruling class. It is to that section of the middle class and the working class that I, and a great many other writers, address ourselves. And here is the change in our attitude, the attitude that is of such of us as have grown up and written under the influence of different ideas. Formerly I, and I think many others, honestly believed in 'self-expression.' We believed that the integrity of the artist consisted in saying what we wanted to say and damning the eyes of the world. There was a certain virtue in being obscure. It shewed that you weren't pandering to the public. But now we have changed. And the reason for the change is simple. What we have to say is urgent. We

## THE CHANGING SCENE

cannot afford to shrug our shoulders and smile if people do not understand. There is something which we must communicate. We no longer want to "express ourselves." We want to warn. We want to advise. What we have to say is urgent.

## CHAPTER VII

### *The Press*

HAVE YOU ever tried to give away something for nothing in the street? If you haven't, you should try. For example, take a ten-shilling note and stand on the kerb, offering it to the people who go by. Most people will turn their heads away and walk on, as if you ought not to exist. They blush with vicarious shame. Others pause, look, mutter and turn away. "No one in their senses would give away a ten-shilling note," they argue. "It must be a fraud." Now, even supposing it were a fraud, you might think it was worth while accepting the proffered note. After all, though you're no richer, you're no poorer by the acquisition of a dud note. But very, very few people seem to argue in this way. Perhaps there is some obscure feeling that if they accept it, they are being laughed at. And they are prepared to lose the possibility of making ten shillings for nothing rather than make fools of themselves. Even when they turn away and walk on, there is still a smouldering resentment against the person who has put them in this dilemma; still perhaps the feeling that the donor is laughing at them for rejecting the gift of valid coinage.

The connection of this experiment with the Daily Press is very strong. It would be possible to publish a newspaper and give it away to the public and still make a profit, if this curious psychological distrust did not exist in the public. If a paper was given away for nothing, people would not believe that its contents were

true. They would feel that there was a catch in it somewhere.

To overcome this prejudice the newspaper proprietors make a nominal charge for their paper and thereby establish confidence. A person paying a penny for a paper feels that he has paid for the information which it contains. The newspaper is a news-service supported by him and people like him. That is his view. Therefore he can trust the contents of the paper.

In actual fact, the paper which he buys for one penny has cost anything between twopence and threepence to produce, and the newspaper reckons the loss involved in each of these transactions as part of the cost of the paper. One morning newspaper, at the death of George V, managed to carry the full story on the front page. In consequence it sold an extra half a million copies on that day. That extra half-million circulation on one day was sheer loss. Its only commercial value was the advertisement afforded to the newspaper: the unassessable hope that a decent percentage of that half-million casual readers would become permanent.

An understanding of the economics of a newspaper gives an insight into policy. Advertisement is the main source of a newspaper's revenue. Without advertisements, newspapers would be forced either to raise their prices or reduce their size. The real business of a newspaper is to induce a sufficient number of people to pay a nominal penny for the daily sheet to maintain or raise the rates of advertisements. Anything that will raise circulation without too great an expenditure is therefore permissible. The supply of accurate news has ceased to be the main object of the paper. Life insurance,

crossword puzzles with huge prizes, fantastic holiday snapshot competitions, presentation sets of Dickens, china, or popular encyclopædias, all these stunts and many others are employed to induce people to pay their penny and swell the circulation figures.

I have dealt with this aspect of the Press in the earlier chapter of Propaganda. It is now my concern rather to examine the Press of twenty-five years ago and to-day, and to see in what respects it has changed.

In its most general aspects there has been no great change. Before the War, the public was not so newspaper-minded as it is to-day. The majority of working-class people confined their reading of papers to Sunday: and the Sunday Press with its lurid court cases, its featured love lives and its flyblown revelation of society scandals provided the conception of the outside world. Lying long of a Sunday morning, the worker unfolded his weekly paper and was projected into a fantastic world of rape, arson, murder and maintenance orders. There was himself and the people, he knew on the one hand: and, on the other, there were the villains, beauties, harlots of whom he read in his Sunday paper. They were the rest of the world. This Sunday-morning trip was doubly pleasant in that the worker was able to share this highly-coloured life in imagination and at the same time remain placidly in his bed, resting and smoking his pipe.

To-day the same tone lingers in the Sunday papers. What might be called the Bloodstained Bloomers Press has round it that peculiar shabby atmosphere that lingers on in advertisements for patent medicines. Typographical changes have been made even in the format of *The Times*. But the Yellow Press remains very

much the same, curiously conservative in its presentation of adultery and opium parties.

But the tendency already in existence before the War has immensely grown. It is not enough for the great public to buy a paper every Sunday. They must buy a paper every day of the week. And so the circulation of the *Express*, the *Mail*, and the tabloids, the *Sketch* and *Mirror*, have grown. The *Daily Herald*, which before the War carried on a precarious existence as the one paper which represented the point of view of the working class, struggled on into the twenties with its circulation hovering round the 60,000 mark. Then Odhams bought up the majority of its shares and developed it as a popular paper. Its circulation is now over two million. Its format is indistinguishable from any other popular paper. It has been delivered into the hands of the advertisers. Policy is regulated not by political necessity, but by fear of offending these sources of revenue. It still remains the official organ of the Labour Party. And that is less inappropriate than it sounds, since the Official Labour Party is proving as subservient to vested interests as its paper is to profit.

The place of the old *Daily Herald* has been taken by the *Daily Worker*. The *Daily Worker* is not run on advertisement revenue, but by private subscription and sales. It is, therefore, less bulky than its capitalist competitors. It gives its subscribers nothing when they are run over and maimed for life. It does not distribute crockery or classics to its readers. Its circulation depends entirely on the value of the news contained within its eight daily pages. It is not handled by large distributing agencies. It cannot be bought at Smith's bookstalls, but is distributed, sold and canvassed almost entirely by



voluntary workers. Many of its contributors are highly-paid journalists, but their salaries are not paid by the *Daily Worker*. Articles are contributed freely by writers who can command large sums from other papers. The system of remuneration is that a capitalist paper will pay high prices for a well-known writer to say nothing in a large number of words and this makes it possible for the writer to write what he really thinks for the *Daily Worker* without payment.

The *Daily Worker*, like the pre-War *Herald*, cannot afford such expensive news service as the capitalist papers. Its social correspondents on the other hand are of very great ability. In the same way as A. J. Cummings made his reputation by his reportage of the Metro-Vickers trial, Frank Pitcairn has created for the ex-*Times* correspondent, who took that name, a journalistic reputation even higher than his previous one.

Whereas the foreign news of other papers comes through either in a heavily censored or chaotic state, the *Worker* is careful to explain the general political and economic scheme into which each news event fits. News from the Far East, for example, the young Marshal's kidnapping of Chiang Kaishek, is unintelligible without this background. Admittedly, journalism of this type does put an interpretation on news. But the method common to the Capitalist Press is, under the pretence of allowing the reader to form his own interpretation, to give him no reliable facts, on which to form an interpretation.

Miss Jane Soames, who recently published a very useful little book called *The English Press* (Nott, 3s.6d.), in her analysis of the English Press, discovers two grave flaws in contrast with Continental papers.

The first is the check placed on any form of journalism by the Laws of Libel. Let me summarise her argument. Libel is "a defamatory statement concerning any person which exposes him to hatred, contempt, or ridicule: which causes him to be shunned or avoided, or which has a tendency to injure him in his office, profession or trade. Such a statement, in writing, printing or other permanent form, is a libel. . . ."

On certain privileged occasions, however, nothing printed can be called in question as libellous. These occasions are in judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings, in Parliament, or by one officer of state to another in course of his official duty. And correspondingly statements in documents made in judicial or quasi-judicial proceedings, or in reports published by either House of Parliament. There are also occasions of what is called 'qualified privilege,' when what might otherwise be considered libellous matter may be published. Lord Buckmaster states, "The circumstances that constitute a privileged occasion can themselves never be catalogued or rendered exact." Another legal authority going a little further says, "The reason for holding any occasion privileged is the common convenience and welfare of society, and it is obvious that no definite line can be so drawn as to mark off with precision those occasions which are privileged, and separate them from those which are not."

The reader can see that the decision as to whether an occasion is privileged or not is a very subtle point. It is decided by the judge alone, without reference to any other authority, whether in his opinion, in the light of previous decisions in analogous cases, the publication of the words complained of was "fairly made by a person

in discharge of some public or private duty, whether legal or moral, or in the conduct of his own affairs in matters where his interest is concerned." But as there is no precise definition of what constitutes a privileged occasion, the judge is guided by his own discretion. A Protestant nation, which cannot accept the infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith, has yet to accept the infallibility of the judge in matters of privilege.

Supposing that the judge rules that the occasion is privileged, yet "the fact that an occasion is privileged does not necessarily protect all that is said or written on that occasion." One legal authority says, "The facts of different cases vary infinitely, and I do not think that the principle can be put more definitely than by saying that the judge has to consider the nature of the duty or right or interest and to rule whether or not the defendant has published something beyond what was germane and reasonably appropriate to the occasion, and has given to it a publicity incommensurate to the occasion." 'Malice,' that is, can rebut a plea of 'Qualified Privilege.'

If newspapers report judicial proceedings contemporaneously, they are privileged. But the same reports, resuscitated in order to throw light on contemporary material "would in the majority of cases be such strong evidence of malice as to render the privilege useless." The Law defines Malice as "any corrupt or wrong motive, or personal spite or ill-will"; and "it lies on the party who would deprive the other party of his privilege to show what the Law calls Malice." "But by that term is meant not only spite, for any indirect motive other than a sense of duty is what the Law calls malice." This 'sense of duty' is obviously a most ambiguous

criterion. For example, is the sense of duty felt by religious people invariably free from malice, spite or envy? Should the sense of duty be duty towards the state, towards one's neighbour, towards God, towards justice? In the case of a state run in the interests of one class, will a judge who identifies that class with the whole state declare that a person acting out of a sense of duty towards the suppressed classes is acting from a sense of duty free from malice?

In any action for libel, not only the author, but the publisher and the printer and the editor are all equally liable. As the border-line between libel and legitimate comment is so vague, it is obvious that remarkable caution will be exercised to prevent any case for libel being brought, especially as in many cases these actions are brought by poverty-stricken individuals who cannot even pay their costs in event of failure.<sup>1</sup>

The initial check against literature liable to be considered libellous is strong. But supposing the matter gets into print, and an action is brought, what is the defence?

"To any reasonable person," says Jane Soames, "the first defence which would spring to the mind would be that what was complained of as libellous was, in fact, true—or, alternatively, fair comment upon a matter of public interest."

<sup>1</sup> One of the results of the overcrowding of the legal profession has been the growth of the class of speculative lawyer, who searches the papers for likely libel actions, approaches the unconscious victim and while guaranteeing him immunity from expenses, agrees to take a large percentage of the damages in event of success.

The uneasiness of printers can be seen by the following example. If a novel of mine, a character stopped outside Lyons and looked at the dummy fruit drinks in the window. These drinks were described as "*false* fruit drinks" and the '*false*' was queried by the printer as libel? This was, of course, due to a misreading of the text, but the fact that a libellous meaning should be misread into the text is an indication of the prevalent fear of prosecution.

But though "it is a good defence to an action for libel and slander that the words complained of are true in substance and in fact," yet "the plea of justification is . . . a dangerous plea to put on record, for if the defendant cannot prove it . . . it may and possibly will aggravate the damages. Moreover, in order to succeed the defendant will have to prove that the *whole* of the defamatory matter is *substantially* true. It is not sufficient under the plea of justification to the whole of the alleged libel to prove that only part of it is true." So, "it is not necessarily sufficient to prove the truth of the facts stated in the article or paragraph, the title also must be justified or the plaintiff will succeed." "If the words complained of be that So-and-So said that the plaintiff did a disgraceful act, proof that So-and-so did in fact say so is no defence; the whole of the defamatory words must be justified, and it must be proved that the plaintiff did in fact do the act alleged." And the defendant is responsible "not only for the words complained of in their direct and primary meaning, but also for any implied or secondary meaning (whether he ever had it in mind or not) which the judge rules that the words are capable of bearing and which the jury decides that they actually bear."

It is well known that it is a very different matter knowing a thing to be true and proving it to be true in a court of law. But before publication, a paper must be certain that any matter which is liable to be alleged as libellous is capable of being proved in a court of law. If each such case was carefully gone into, the expense of journalism would be multiplied several times: and so what happens is that all such cases are eliminated. This means in fact that practically every matter which

it is to the public interest to explore is ignored, in favour of material that will cause offence to no powerful interests. And this policy is one which does not conflict with the general aims of the capitalist Press. Public confidence is the superficial sanction of a society which rests ultimately on force. The exposure of abuses, of corruption or governmental negligence causes fluctuations in the stock market, which are only profitable when they are organised with the cognizance of the brokers. The aim of the Press, unless the interest of the proprietors is such as to make it desirable to shake certain shares, is on the whole to present an air of tranquillity. Foreigners are supposed to look with envy and astonishment on the imperturbability of the British public. No matter what the case, the Marconi Scandal or the Budget Leakage, the creation of new peers or the deposition of a monarch, these things appear, are discussed with interest and often with heat, and then are dismissed in favour of whether Velasquez's Philip IV has gained or lost by being cleaned. "Marvellous," says the foreigner, "the British phlegm!" But it is not in fact the British phlegm so much as the British Press which produces this result. The fizzling out of the Budget Leakage charges is a good example of this. Expressing itself with the greatest moderation, the committee of investigation had nevertheless to find certain members of Parliament guilty. They were forced to resign from public life: and immediately the cry was raised, "They have paid." The betrayal of state secrets, the violation of the trust which should be the most careful treasure of a man in such a position was considered to be expiated by resignation and retirement. "Don't kick a fellow when he is down," was the argument used even by the *New States-*

*man*, a paper which prides itself on independence and clarity of judgment. In Parliament, one M.P., William Gallacher, made himself nasty by pointing out that the political leaders of the Left Wing were jailed for the expression of their views and by such a measure those censured by the committee should at least stand trial for their offence. "Sit down, you cad," shouted a back-bencher on the Government side. And after explaining that the term 'cad' was a proud title for him to receive from the Government because it shewed that he at least had not sold out on his electors, Mr. Gallacher sat down and the incident was closed.

It was not due to feelings of sportsmanship that this course was adopted. If the incident had happened to a Member holding Left Wing views there would have been a tremendous outcry, with no talk of "He has paid." The argument in that case would have been that without consideration for individuals, the probity and purity of public life must be defended at all costs. But in this case the Government was forced into an investigation, which proved the charges of corruption levelled against a minister of their Cabinet: and they were afraid of the consequences of a judicial trial. "Whatever the findings, they thought, the result will be a distrust of public ministers, which will jeopardise the Government position." And so we were told not to kick a fellow when he was down.

In the case of the late King and Mrs. Simpson, the procedure was slightly different. All news was suppressed in the English Press for months on end. American papers arrived in this country and were heavily censored. Only those references which did not refer to the parties by name slipped through the vigilance of the authorities.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

But as soon as the official signal was given to release the news, a heavy Press campaign was launched against the King. It is impossible to know the inside facts of this case: impossible to know what foundation of truth there is for the various rumours current at the time. One cannot evaluate the Nazi affiliations of Mrs. Simpson, the anger of the Government at the late King's sympathy with the miners in South Wales and his promise that something would be done, the nature of the King's personal relations with the Primate. These and many other similar questions will not be revealed for many years to come.

What we can evaluate, however, is the public conduct of the case, the union of the Church with the Governing Class, to force the King to abdicate, and to prepare a public which had been cajoled by every sort of propaganda to revere the person of King Edward VIII to turn on him and receive his abdication with regretful relief. This amounted to a sort of major operation on public opinion and, it is interesting to see how it was done.

The Bishop of Bradford kicked off, with a general attack on the King's morals, sufficiently definite for the newspapers to claim a direct reference to the King's wish to marry, yet sufficiently vague for the Bishop to disclaim this reference. This was a double thrust. It not only attacked the King on particular grounds, but leaving those particular grounds on one side, attacked his whole moral outlook and attitude to religion.

The papers then got going and, to begin with, there was great diversity of opinion. The *News Chronicle*, for example, a paper reflecting the Nonconformist thought of the country, published a series of letters all strongly



advocating a morganatic marriage. The Government papers, however, knew that it had been decided that the King had to go. So they started straight off, resurrecting those moribund phrases like "We fain would think" which are reserved for solemn occasions of this type. They were very cautious. It was just a crisis. We must be prepared for a great shock.

At the end of the first round, it looked as if public opinion was going to make the wrong choice. It was therefore announced that a morganatic marriage was impossible: and though the King had only suggested the morganatic marriage as the next best thing to a full marriage, he was now attacked on the grounds that even he realised the unsuitability of the match, by suggesting that it should be morganatic.

It was possible that the constitutions could be changed to make a morganatic marriage legal. But the Government refused to do this and this decision passed unchallenged. Once that stage was reached, the fight was over. Either the King had to give way or abdicate. The Government, by forcing the King's hand, had presented the problem in such a way that they could not lose.

But even so there was a dramatic necessity for delay. If the King's abdication had come immediately, public opinion would not have been prepared. There would have been a feeling that the issues had been forced, as indeed they had. For this reason a period of suspense had to elapse, a period of violent discussion, hourly bulletins and general unrest. The onus for this delay was placed on the King. "The choice lies with him" was the argument. "It is a pity he can't make up his mind quicker, but we must wait with patience." He

## THE CHANGING SCENE

circulations and a small number of London papers with large circulations. But the number of different opinions which find expression is very much less than the number of papers. She prints a list of the main Press groups, as follows:

<i>Group.</i>	<i>Newspapers owned.</i>	<i>London Circulation.</i>
	LONDON:	
Odham's Press ... ..	The Daily Herald ... ..	2,000,000
	The People ... ..	3,000,000
Beaverbrook Group ...	The Daily Express ... ..	2,126,451
	The Sunday Express ... ..	1,266,353
	The Evening Standard ...	420,248
Berry Group ... ..	The Daily Telegraph ... ..	489,568
	The Sunday Times ... ..	250,000
	The Daily Sketch ... ..	1,012,603
	The Sunday Graphic ... ..	1,652,017

### PROVINCIAL AND SPECIALISED:

The Financial Times  
 Aberdeen Express and Journal  
 Evening Express (Aberdeen)  
 Daily Dispatch (Manchester)  
 Evening Chronicle (Manchester)  
 Empire News (Manchester)  
 Sunday Chronicle (Manchester)  
 Daily Record and Mail (Glasgow)  
 Weekly Record (Glasgow)  
 Northern Weekly Record  
 Irish Weekly Record  
 Sunday Mail  
 Evening News (Glasgow)  
 Bristol Times and Mirror  
 Bristol Times and Echo  
 Darlington and Stockton Times  
 Ripon and Richmond Chronicle  
 Rensdale and Weardale News  
 Derby Mercury and Express  
 Sheffield Daily Telegraph

# THE PRESS

<i>Group.</i>	<i>Newspapers owned.</i>	<i>London Circulation.</i>
Berry Group—(contd.)	PROVINCIAL AND SPECIALISED (contd.):	
	Yorkshire Telegraph and Star	
	Evening Chronicle (Newcastle)	
	Newcastle Weekly Chronicle	
	North Mail and Newcastle Daily Chronicle	
	Sunday Sun	
	North-Eastern Daily Gazette (Middlesborough)	
	North-Eastern Daily Gazette (Bishop Auckland)	
	North Weekly Gazette	
	Western Mail	
	South Wales Evening Express	
	South Wales Evening News	
	Weekly Mail and Cardiff Times	
	Answers	
	Comic Cuts	
	Home Chat	
	Popular Gardening	
	Woman's Journal	
	Fashions for All	
	Amateur Photographer	
	Autocar	
	Automobile Engineer	
	Bus and Coach	
	Experimental Wireless	
	Ice and Cold Storage	
	Motor Body Building	
	Motor Cycle	
	Motor Transport	
	Wireless World	
	Yachting World	

## LONDON:

Daily Chronicle Group	The News Chronicle	...	1,350,000
	The Star	... ..	680,556

## PROVINCIAL AND SPECIALISED:

Daily Mail and Hull Times  
Doncaster Press

## THE CHANGING SCENE

<i>Group.</i>	<i>Newspapers owned.</i>	<i>London Circulation.</i>
Daily Chronicle Group ( <i>contd.</i> )	PROVINCIAL AND SPECIALISED Eastern Morning News and Hull News Edinburgh Evening News Grimsby Times and Telegraph Northampton Independent Northampton Mercury	( <i>contd.</i> )

### LONDON:

Daily Mail and	The Daily Mail ... ..	1,750,000
Daily Mirror Group	The Evening News ... ..	727,946
	The Sunday Dispatch ... ..	868,378
	The Daily Mirror ... ..	1,000,000
	The Sunday Pictorial ... ..	1,882,000

### PROVINCIAL AND SPECIALISED:

The Continental Daily Mail  
 Daily Mail Atlantic Edition  
 Derby Daily Telegraph  
 Derby Daily Echo  
 Citizen (Gloucester)  
 Gloucestershire Echo  
 Cheltenham Chronicle and Graphic  
 South Wales Daily Post and Cambria  
 Daily Leader  
 Newcastle Evening World  
 Bristol Evening World  
 Staffordshire Sentinel  
 Hull Daily Mail and Evening News  
 Law Times

This list is not comprehensive and no figures are given by Miss Soames for the Provincial papers which she names. But the five financial groups cited between them own or control sixteen London papers, of which ten are published on weekdays and have a total average net circulation of 11,557,372; and six published on

## THE PRESS

Sundays with an average daily net circulation of 8,918,748.

Independent of these groups are six other important daily and Sunday newspapers.

LONDON:	<i>Circulation.</i>
The Times ... ..	185,843
The Morning Post ... ..	123,643
The Daily Worker ... ..	58,000
The Observer ... ..	210,901
The Sunday Referee ... ..	160,000
The News of the World ... ..	3,350,000
Reynolds News ... ..	425,000

These figures are those of copies sold. From them it is only possible to judge roughly the number of readers who are reached. The common assessment of this number is to multiply the sales figures by 3.5. According to this reckoning, the readership of the *News of the World* is 11,725,000 and that of the *Daily Worker* 203,000. Since, however, these figures originate from the advertising departments of newspaper offices, I think it is probable that they are exaggerated, unless they are meant to include the people who read what their fish and chips are wrapped in, 2.5 or 3 seems to me a more likely average figure per copy.

The point of all these figures, however, is to shew that the daily reading matter of the public is controlled by a few very powerful financial groups, all of whose interests except one is the maintenance of capitalism and whose policy within that setting is discoverable by an examination of the further holdings of their financiers and their political affiliations.

It is fantastic to call the English Press, as it has been called, the 'voice of the people.' It speaks not for, but

## THE CHANGING SCENE

to, the people. It tells them not what they think, but what they should think. The Press is not the mirror of the public, but the public is the mirror of the Press. The myth is preserved of its popularity, because it has been found to be a valuable myth, financially and politically. The difference between the muzzled fascist Press and the fangless English Press is essentially a difference of myth rather than freedom. In fascist countries they know what is in the papers is merely an official version of the truth. In Great Britain, they don't.

In France there is a multiplicity of small newspapers. The danger arising from this was that these newspapers were easy to buy or to corrupt. The Blum Government has now made it imperative that all sources of income should be made public, so that readers may know whether the newspaper they are buying has been bribed by Italy, Germany, some armament firm, financier or foundry owner. Now that this main objection to small ownership is overcome, the French Press system has the advantage over the English that a large number of defined interests are able to express their views through public journals. In England this liberty of speech is granted only to the dozen or so gigantic corporations cited above.

Again in France, the discussion of opinion is regarded as part of the news. It is not enough for a radical to know what radicals in his own country are thinking. He wants to know other shades of opinion among his compatriots and abroad. In the English Press you may at times see quotations from the foreign Press. But in nearly all these cases you find that Right Wing English papers quote only Right Wing foreign papers, and Left

Wing English papers quote from the Left. For the most part, however, the opinions of foreign countries are given very little prominence. This has a very misleading influence both on the British public and on British politicians. Their views of foreign affairs are based on the English Press and in consequence they are irrelevant to the situation, because no reckoning has been made of the state of foreign feeling. Miss Soames remarks in her book the extraordinary disparity of the English and Continental Press over the Abyssinian War. The policy of Great Britain was regarded abroad as entirely self-seeking: at home it was regarded as almost a holy mission for the League. The English papers gave almost no indication of the attitude of Continental powers.

It would not be fair to blame this insularity entirely on to the Press. It is a characteristic of the English to regard the ditch separating them from Europe as an ultimate boundary. We might be crossing seas in coracles instead of aeroplanes for all the change we have noticed in communications. John Gunther notes the announcement of Channel gales on a poster. 'Continent isolated.' That he regards as typical of the English character. And it is.

But we have not reached the stage of degeneration, when we need to count our faults as virtues, like a beggar whose capital is running sores. It has been in our past a matter of peculiar pride to claim self-sufficiency for this island, which is in fact more dependent than any other. It did not seem fantastic to us that Viscount Grey should be our Foreign Minister, though he could speak no foreign language and had never been abroad, except once to France for a week,

and so it does not seem fantastic to have a Press as ignorant of the rest of the world as a school magazine is of England. Each paper continues its own course as though no other were being followed by contemporaries. The policy of splendid isolation may be preached only by the Beaverbrook Press, but it is practised by nearly all. It is not what isn't but should be, but what shouldn't be but is. Yearly more certain that its true business has little to do with news, our Press grows more vulgar as it becomes more 'popular.' The standards of journalistic integrity are about as low as they have ever been. And as the political situation grows more tense and complex, the incompetence of our news service becomes more and more plain. Those who want facts, who want news, are fobbed off with the competition of Press-lords as to who should be Public Nitwit Number 1.



## CHAPTER VIII

### *Education*

"They take 'em young into that school, and they says to them, 'come in 'ere and we'll improve your minds,' they says, and in the little kiddies go as good as gold. . . . Out they comes, no brains in their 'eads, and wound up nice and tight, ready to touch their 'ats at anyone who looks at them. . . . And they runs about spry and does all the dirty work, and feels thankful they're allowed to live. They take a positive pride in 'ard work for its own sake. Arter they bin pithed."—H. G. WELLS, *The Wonderful Visit*.

WE HAVE examined so far the cultural expression of our time in comparison with the pre-War period. It remains to examine the basis of this culture, that is to say the organisation of the state, the effects which that organisation produces on the different classes of the British people and the different methods of training used for these classes. •

In this chapter I intend to deal with this last question, because it provides a link between culture and society. In education can be seen the whole plan. The school, even as the headmaster says, is the world in small.

In a society divided crudely into privileged and unprivileged classes it is obvious that training will be best obtained through a division in social training. The qualities demanded in those who hold power are different from those required in those submitting to that power.

We find, therefore, that education is roughly divided into public-school and state-school training. The public school exists for the rich, the state school for

the poor. The public school is surrounded with a propaganda of superiority, the state school with that of inferiority. Children who go to public schools are considered uneducated if they leave before the age of seventeen, and probably uncultured if they don't go to a university. Children who go to state schools are considered adequately equipped by the age of fourteen. Certain boys, however, are allowed to go on from state secondary schools to the smaller public schools. These boys are the very pick of the secondary schools and it is realised that if they were not transferred, they might provide the nucleus of discontent. Once they are removed from their own class (the state acting in this capacity as the benefactor to the individual, at the same time as being the enemy of the whole class), they become subject to the mass blackmail of the public-school type. If they deny their own origin and feel the shame due to their own charity position and decide that they will identify themselves with the boys among whom they find themselves, they have a fairly good time at school. I say only 'fairly good,' because the admission of social inferiority does in fact shatter their integrity. Whatever their intelligence and ability, they are subject finally to a form of snobbery which maintains them sometimes for the whole of their lives the unhappy enviers of stupid people, born of richer parents.

This snobbery has been jeered at and satirised for years and years. The basis of the satire is nearly always that of Thackeray's *Book of Snobs*, the laughter of superior people at inferiors trying to be superior. This type of satire is never effective, because it is in fact one stage more snobbish than the snobbery it attacks. Snobbery exists, and will continue to exist until it is attacked from

below, because snobbery is a form of social control exercised from above. The attacks of the socially superior are merely directed against the intrusion of the parvenu into a social clique.

People are fond of comparing the democratic spirit of U.S.A. with that of England. Every man in America believes himself as good as you, they say. You may be richer than he is, but he is your equal. But in England you get a situation where one class calls another 'sir' or 'madam' and where the parvenu sometimes finds it very hard to be accepted by people even poorer than himself who have social pretensions.

In the United States, except in the stickier Boston circles, wealth is the only criterion of social standing. It is an avowed plutocracy. But in England we have an aristocracy existing side by side with a plutocracy. This aristocracy recruits itself continually from the plutocracy, selling its titles like harlots their bodies to those who have enough dough. With the proper environment, you can make an 'aristocrat' in two generations. And these mules, got by wealth on birth, prove the stubbornest upholders of the aristocratic system.

The aristocracy is economically a parasite class: and so it is not surprising that their standards should also be parasitic. The mechanism of snobbery is perfect for this end. Provided that the whole population of England can be infected with this snobbery, capitalism and privilege remain safe. Social prestige continues to be a marketable commodity. If the limits between one class and another remained firm, if, that is, there was no possibility of promotion from one class to another, a firm stand would have been taken by the merchant class and the whole principle of reliance on birth would

have been overthrown. England would be in the state of U.S.A., with a small and almost universally ridiculed group of snobs, isolated in Mayfair. There would still remain the antagonism between the rich and poor. (In the Land of Opportunity, the equality of man and man rests ultimately on the dream of each poor man that he will be as rich as Ford or Pierpoint Morgan. It is the cultivation of this dream, by means of Success Stories, that succeeds in dividing the individual workers of America. If he is going to be rich one day, what's the use of linking up with all the other poor saps in the factory who are going to stay just where they are? The understanding of the illusory nature of most fortune-making, caused by the depression, has done more than anything else to strengthen the Labour Movement in U.S.A. But even now the success myth has a very strong hold.)

The antagonism between rich and poor in this country is tackled seriously first at school. At state schools the children realise in the first place that they are only attending because they are too poor to go to better schools. The accommodation is inadequate and unhealthy. The classrooms are too small for the classes, and the classes are too large for suitable teaching. It is possible to hear in one room what is going on in another. The rooms are very often inadequately heated, and in addition the children are susceptible to cold through undernourishment. The teachers, harried by overwork, struggling to maintain their cultural standard on preposterous wages, are forced to discard their educational ideals one by one in the sheer effort of carrying on at all. There is little enough done for these children, but what is done is done in the name of a beneficent state. And

## EDUCATION

if you're good, if you behave yourself and work hard and are clever, there is just a chance that you yourself will get out of this beastly environment, will be sent at the expense of the state to a school where twenty, not forty, children are taught at one time. And there will be decent lavatories, and you won't be so cold that you can't write for chilblains, and there will be a playing-ground with grass on it and perhaps a gymnasium, some tennis courts, an adequate library. These opportunities are, of course, only open to very few children. However high the standard of learning was raised, the opportunities would still be much about the same. You have to beat all the other boys in the form, and then you'll get on. Get on! Little boy, rise! That is the theme song of capitalist England. The parents, sick of their own environment, swearing that if they can help it, their children shall not suffer what they themselves have suffered, are among the loudest to sing that song. That's what they're meant to do. Each family is running its own candidates for advancement in the social scale. Right from the start at home and at school, underlying all friendships, is this inducement to disunion: under capitalism the individual rises at expense of his fellows. Culture is a ladder, not a mountain. Each individual scales it rung by rung, not roped and helping others at each stage.

It was feared at one time that popular education was going to mean "the rule of the uneducated," which was the capitalist way of describing the overthrow of the exploiting classes by the exploited. Now, however, this fear has been temporarily allayed. Popular education was necessary to provide an *efficient subservient* class. This is a dual and conflicting aim. Skill in labour depends

## THE CHANGING SCENE

upon the release and development of mental and physical power. Subserviency depends upon its répression and deformity.

This conflict, however, is overcome by setting the subservient class to learn the lessons of their masters. They are taught the capitalist version of history, geography, literature and if they ever get far enough, of economics. The Church, the distortion of whose teaching has been found since its early days to keep the weak and poverty-stricken in subjection, lends all its power to fix its masochistic imprint on the souls of the poor. So that by the time these children leave school, they are equipped not to live, not to think, not to enjoy, but to fulfil their function in the capitalist state, to remain subservient, to find in their depressed state in this world an investment in the next. The mind, the unity and the will of the working class are destroyed in this process: because they are dangerous to the state. If they were developed and exerted, the efficiency of the workers would be incomparably increased. But their subserviency would have disappeared.

There are, and have been for a long time, teachers aware of the class-bias of the textbooks from which they are compelled to teach. But though they have launched their protests from time to time and though books have been written that might take their place, the protests have been useless and the books remain unused. This is only what must be expected. Those who attempt to use state education for the benefit of the children being educated are in fact trying to overturn the whole economic system. Many teachers seem to be unconscious of this. They seem to think the organisation is unenlightened, because it knows no better: when in

fact its lack of enlightenment is part of a deliberate 'but unstated' policy. A certain amount of useful verbal teaching can be and is to a certain extent being used in state schools by teachers of courage. But it is a dangerous course, which may bring direct penalties upon the teacher, and almost certainly will retard his advancement to a headmastership.<sup>1</sup> A certain number of teachers have realised that the future of education is not isolated from all other questions: but that the social services are in fact part of the capitalist front. They realise that educational reform therefore cannot come in the manner they want it without changes being made in the structure of society as a whole. What they desire as educationalists is forcing them to a position of social criticism and political action much wider than their initial ideas led them to think was necessary.

The same process is taking place with teachers working in the schools of the rich. At first sight it may seem strange that the interest of teachers in public schools should be coincident with those of state school-teachers. But this is a fact. There is, of course, great need for closer co-operation between the two branches of workers. They do not meet in the course of their work and they are not encouraged to meet outside it. There is a natural social antipathy, increased by the fact that the majority of 'state school-teachers are recruited from state schoolboys and public-school teachers from public schools. Yet the criticisms that the public-school teacher has to make of the public schools

<sup>1</sup> Schoolmasters standing for Parliament, for example, are liable to be accused of neglecting their scholastic duties. It would be interesting to see whether this objection would be raised against 'National' Government candidates. Unfortunately, the scholastic profession is not needed by that party to supply candidates. Big business, law and the armed forces are able to supply the necessary candidates. So the comparison cannot be made.

spring from the same source as those levelled by the state teacher at state schools. Each finds that he is restricted by authority in the scope of his teaching: that his aims, if he is anybody except a pædagogic hack, are inconsistent with the demands of the school. The state teacher has to produce an efficient type of subservient worker. The public-school teacher has to produce men capable of serving the state and empire in the higher capacities. Though one has to model an inferior type and the other a superior one, neither is encouraged to produce full men or women.

A full man or woman is not one fixed in caste. He is free. He is free to move among others without the fear of congenital inferiority or the arrogance of powerful ancestry. He has the humility of knowing what others can do and he cannot, and the pride of his own particular abilities. Liberated from the trammels of childish fixations, he can will and act as an adult. He can distinguish between his self-interest and the interest of all. Having made that distinction, he is capable of acting in the interest of all, not because he is a prig, but because he has recognised that his own interest is ultimately the interest of all. His intelligence is not content with the superficial explanation of individual events. He wishes to understand the world in which he lives and he is conscious both of his unimportance in a world of millions and his personal importance to his immediate associates. He does not lust for power, yet the idea of power is not so laden with guilt that he refuses all responsibility. He is the enemy of prejudice, superstition, injustice and hypocrisy. Yet he is not so taken up with abstraction that he loses contact with people, nor so grave that he is incapable of laughter or relaxation. Laughter, in



fact, may be for him not the negation but the affirmation of seriousness: thought not the substitute but the prelude for action.

This is my picture of the educated man, a composite picture of educated men perhaps, since it is not likely that any one man will combine all these qualities. With modifications, I think this ideal is that of many people to-day. It differs from the immediately post-War ideal, in that it places more emphasis on social adjustment than on sexual adjustment. Sexual adjustment is extremely important. I think no man or woman can be mentally healthy whose psycho-sexual life is maladjusted. But though that adjustment is both an end in itself and the condition of healthy social activity, it is not the be-all and end-all of existence. This last sentence is possibly the most significant comparison of the change in thought during the last twenty-five years. In 1912 it would not have been necessary to write that sentence. It would be as trite as twice two is four. To-day, thanks to the 'twenties, it has an element of novelty.

But to revert to education. The ideal of education outlined above is held by a number of teachers, especially in public schools. Their predecessors before the War would have been more æsthetic and less precise in their ideals. They wanted to produce people who loved Beauty, Truth and Goodness. That meant loving Plato and Keats and Rupert Brooke. It meant being keen on other things than making money, on furnishing their houses with taste, on subscribing to deserving charities, not forgetting that there were other people less fortunate than themselves, playing cricket with the villagers and having a tankard of good ale with them after the match, all classes temporarily sunk in the

comradeship of sport, leading the ignorant by courage, by thoughtfulness and generosity. It meant in fact taking society as it is, enjoying to the full all the advantages which you were lucky enough to possess, and salving a conscience that might at times grow uneasy by social work which caused you no great inconvenience or discomfort. It was an easier time for the leisured and privileged classes: and so this ideal was softer and easier than our present-day ideal. The implications of the portrait I have outlined above are more positive and practical. Such a man cannot live to-day in retirement. He cannot fob off his sense of duty by retiring to the study. He is forced by his convictions further and further into the arena of action. That is what makes his thought good. He no longer juggles with ideas, like H. G. Wells. He must work with people, themselves limited in intelligence and mental power. To translate his thought into terms of action he has to understand those people, the conditions under which they work and live, the way their minds operate. He has to be prepared to simplify, and that often means to clarify, his thought so that his audience can see what he means. And he has to be prepared to demonstrate that courage, foresight and initiative, which the middle classes regarded as reserved for the captaincy of a cricket team or a battalion, in the conduct of everyday life.

Public schools, as I have said elsewhere<sup>1</sup> have not grown out of any theory. They are an organic growth, and the form they have taken is conditioned partly by

<sup>1</sup> *Challenge to Schools* (Hogarth Press) contains an analysis of the structure of the public school, from a psychological and social angle. I do not wish to repeat the arguments which I then used; but I am still broadly in agreement with what I wrote there. I refer the reader to that pamphlet, if he is interested.

the nature of their institution and partly by their environment. By their environment I mean the society in which they were formed and the purpose which they were planned to fulfil. This purpose was originally to police the empire, to provide both for home and abroad administrators who were capable of carrying out our policy without challenging it.

The first lesson that such an administrator must learn is to think ably about means without reference to ends. In consequence we find a very great deal of a public-school curriculum devoted to forms of study, useless in themselves, but productive of mental agility.

The study of classics in the time of the Renaissance was the study of the most advanced knowledge of the time. All that was best in literature, in philosophy, in science, history and medicine was written in Latin or Greek. But with the passing of time, the scientific, philosophical and mathematical knowledge incorporated in the classical languages became available in the vulgar tongue. This knowledge was in some cases superseded, and in others added to. There remained, however, the literature of the Greeks and Romans, the beauty of which did not survive translation: and their histories, which could perhaps be more usefully employed for the study of history than later periods, because the scale of their operations was comparatively so small. However, even these considerations were increasingly discounted by the fact that post-Renaissance literature grew so rich and post-Renaissance history so complex that the understanding of the structure of the Greek city state or the Roman Empire did not contribute greatly to the understanding of contemporary affairs. If the study of literature cannot bring an understanding of what is

being written at the present and the study of history an understanding of what is being done at the present, I for one consider that these studies are worthless. But the study of the classics has not been abandoned. With suitable teaching, it might still be possible to make of ancient history and the dead languages a powerful instrument for the understanding of the modern world. This danger, however, has been avoided. The study of the classics has been reduced to the study of grammar. In lower forms, grammar and syntax are regarded as all-important. It is recognised that this ground-work is extremely dull. It does not stimulate the intelligence, but it trains the memory and conditions the mind to apply rules without challenging them. Behind the usage of language there is a form of logic which explains the usage. But in the teaching of Latin and Greek, the pupil is told to take these usages on faith. "This is so, because it is so. Now go on and do an exercise applying this rule accurately in ten different sentences."

It might be thought that this unpleasant labour was being performed so that the boys should later be able to read the classics with ease and so be able to grasp the essential meaning of what they read without having to worry about grammatical questions. That would be a mistake. Grammar and syntax is not relaxed as the pupil grows more expert. Instead, the grammatical research becomes more and more complex. The texts of the great plays are studied, not for their beauty but for the elucidation of textual difficulties. Scaliger and Porson, not Æschylus and Sophocles, are the heroes of upper classical forms. The discovery of an ingenious emendation is the only activity superior to a full know-

ledge and evaluation of all the theories that have accumulated round some celebrated 'crux.'

It is the same with history. The general development of Greece and Rome and their importance in the history of the world is lost sight of in the specialist study of the details of Cicero's consulate. The scholarly emphasis on detail absorbs the attention that might otherwise be directed towards the understanding of general principles.

The reader may say that this is due to lack of intelligence on the part of the scholastic authorities. They accept this state of affairs without criticism: if they criticised, they would probably change it. But I am not interested in what they would do if they criticised. I am interested in what is, not what might be. The fact that they don't criticise shews that they don't feel that anything is wrong. The fact that they don't feel that anything is wrong is due to the fact that they are doing what is expected of them. Theory and practice are indivisible.

Public-schools are run for the production of the 'administrative type.' Administration is the application of law to particular cases. The good administrator does not challenge the laws he has to administer. They are facts, rules as absolute as the grammatical rules he learnt to apply at school. If he had been taught to examine grammatical constructions and find reasons for these constructions in the logic of the nation whose language it was, he might also begin to examine the basis of the system under which he was living, and whatever the conclusions he came to, he would be less efficient as an administrator than a man who accepted these rules on faith. It is for this reason that such importance is laid on the knowledge of the classics in Civil

## THE CHANGING SCENE

Service examinations. A man whose brilliance lies in producing pastiches of Cicero, Thucydides or Ovid, you might think, was not necessarily a suitable man to police the British Empire. You might think that the understanding of native civilisation, their history, modes of life and thought, were more important. But you would be wrong. The policing of the British Empire depends on the acceptance of imperial policy, not on the understanding of natives. The classical scholar, with his highly developed concentration on means and obliviousness of ends, is admirably conditioned to this function.

"But, the reader will object, not only administrators, but legislators are drawn from the public schools. The mentality of the legislator is concerned both with ends and means." This is not correct. Any textbook of political science would of course endorse the view that the legislator is concerned with ends and the means to those ends. The good of the state as a whole must be adjudged by the legislative body and suitable legislation introduced as and when it becomes necessary. That is the view of academic theory. But it is not what happens. Our legislators are in fact engrossed in means.<sup>1</sup> Their job is to reconcile the various interests, which bring pressure upon them. Their policy is one of ever-shifting compromise, without regard for general principles, or understanding of the ultimate effects of their actions. The greatest good they can hope for is that nothing they do will make much difference one way or another. The true government of Great Britain takes place in the City of London, not in the Borough of Westminster.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Pillars of Cloud*, John Scanlon (Chapman and Hall). Mr. Scanlon has brilliantly analysed the opportunism of all political parties since the War. He has related baldly their policies and counter-policies and their effects. The result is a mordant farce.

## EDUCATION

The Houses of Parliament may try to regulate the small sphere in which they are allowed to act. But their efforts are negligible, unless they have the backing of the business men and financiers. And that only happens when it pays those interests to give their backing.

A politician, unless conditioned to concentrate on means rather than ends, might be liable to question the efficiency of the parliamentary machine. He might examine, for example, the question of unemployment and the means taken by post-war Governments to deal with it. He might find that though innumerable assurances had been given that it was being tackled, it never was tackled. He might examine what measures had been projected and try to discover why they had failed. He might ask himself why it was that in 1936, which was supposed to be a year of abnormal prosperity, over a million and a half insured workers were unemployed. There is almost no limit to the troubling and awkward questions that he might not only ask himself but the ministers of His Majesty's Government. But this is not the case. The battle of Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton: the battle of the Means Test in the classrooms of Harrow. Mr. Baldwin prays God that he may never do anything to make the old school ashamed of him and announce his ambition to pack the Cabinet with his old schoolfellows. Mr. Baldwin is a fine example of the public-school training. A man of extraordinary astuteness, he conceals himself as an honest pig-lover. He praises the English countryside and spends his holidays in Aix-les-bains. Foxy-faced by nature, he is photographed and stuck on hoardings, honest Stan with an old pipe in his mouth. Lloyd George, whose folly lay in revealing his intelligence, is

## THE CHANGING SCENE

known as an opportunist. Honest Stan is equally an opportunist, but except when he forgets himself and with 'appalling honesty' admits that his election policy was a pure catch-vote to keep in power, he gets away with his tight-rope opportunism. The most superficial examination of his career is enough to prove that he has not the slightest intention of defending any other interests except those of big business. His foreign policy is leading us to the 1914 situation with increasing speed. His domestic policy consists in reviving employment by enormous expenditure on unproductive armaments for no defined policy. And yet, by a series of coups, he retains his leadership of his discontented party. He has caught the imagination of the country and kept it, in a way that Eden caught it in 1935. In 1936, Eden was past. He was used to gain the '35 election. After that, he became a puppet to Baldwin. His policy was too progressive. He had the choice of resigning and keeping his integrity or toeing the party line. Office was worth more than integrity. He toed the line. The true public-school man, to whom *esprit de corps* provides the flattering rationalisation of moral cowardice.

"But," the reader will object, "the majority of public-school boys neither enter the Civil Service nor politics. They go into the Army, Navy and Air Force, if they are stupid but healthy. They go into the Church, if they're stupid and unhealthy. They go in for law and banking and business and broking. They go into films, and night clubs and publishing firms. They act and they write and they paint and they sculp and plan housing estates. They plant tea in Ceylon, and coffee in Kenya, and wheat in Canada, potatoes in Ireland. They become research chemists, professors, engineers, inventors, ex-



plorers, advertising agents, barhornets, dirt-track riders, professional tennis players, artists' models, souteneurs and travelling salesmen. They run golf clubs, peep-shows, garages, races and charity rags. They are doctors, schoolmasters, boy-scout leaders, Buchmanites, confidence men, tramps, journalists, prison governors and musicians. How can you say that one type of education suffices for all these professions?"

The number of public schools has steadily increased in the last fifty years. The grammar school, which for a long while provided a local education irrespective of class, is now in most cases delocalised. The poor children of the neighbourhood are sent to elementary and secondary schools: the richer children, nicely secluded from the rough lads of the slums, go to the grammar school, which has now called itself a Public School, because its headmaster sits on the Headmasters' Conference, adding his bromide to those of his colleagues from Eton, Harrow and Winchester. These schools provide for the children of the black-coated worker and small business-man the appearance of a public-school education. This consists chiefly in supplying old boys with a distinctive tie and a veneer of the 'public-school manner.' The educational training is on a very low level, matriculation being the ideal of most parents of this class: the social training creates a pathetic shadow of refinement. The old boys at the same time despise those who received their education from the state and feel inferior to those who went to 'real public-schools.'

<sup>1</sup> In *The Old School* I related a story which illustrates this type of snobbery. When my brother was in New York, he met an Englishman, and in the course of conversation asked him what school he had been to. The Englishman said, "Westminster." My brother said, "I went to St. Paul's." The Englishman leaned forward, and said, "Well, to tell you the truth, so did I." This snobbery exists, even in the case of St. Paul's, of which there is no reason to feel ashamed. It exists even more with Narkover and other schools of that type.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

They are the perfect 'tweenies,' whose terror is to fall into the class below and ambition to rise into that higher class, where you don't have to pinch over one or two veg. at lunch, where you can have all the tobacco you want, and a car and a nurse and two maids, or one at any rate.

This is the most disunited class in society, the most ridden by fears. There is the fear of losing your job. There is the fear of making a social gaff and either displaying ignorance or being snubbed. There is the fear of being left penniless in old age, too proud to take a pension. There is the fear of using impolite language, offending a lady, committing the sin against the Holy Ghost. There is the fear that your neighbour's flowers are finer than yours, that your trousers are baggy and your flybuttons undone. And, finally, the fear that your fear of being ridiculous is making you ridiculous.

So each strives towards a model of correctness, not made in his own heart, but taken from without, an absurd travesty of what the good man does. When people talk of the hypocrisy of the middle-classes, they lose the essential motive. Their hypocrisy is not the homage which vice pays to virtue: it is the product of social inferiority. The rich and the poor usually do what they want to do. You can see freedom in their movements. But for the 'tweenies' the question is "What does one do?", the desire always to conform to 'one' whose moral taste is impeccable and whose social judgments correct and precise. You can see in their gestures, the fingering of the tie, the particularity of the placing of the breast-pocket handkerchief, the outward sign of inner uncertainty.

## EDUCATION

If this conditioning of English society produced, not happiness, but contentment, the chief arguments against it would still hold: namely that contentment gained at the expense of intelligence, culture and vitality was a costly bargain. But, in fact, this form of education does not produce contentment. It was designed for a form of society which no longer functions efficiently. The clerk whose home was his castle and backyard his estate is no longer secure. The children, whom it has been his pride to educate rather better than he himself was educated, find that they can't get jobs. Everything is overcrowded. There is, of course, a clamour for recruits for the armed forces. But the clerk has as part of his experience a firm resolve that war must not happen again. Even the lapse of twenty years has not turned that memory rosy. He looks back on the time, quite likely with the feeling that the War made a man of him. But he is not prepared for his sons to be made men at the risk of being made cripples or corpses.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Despite the endeavours of headmasters, clerics and soldiers, the armed forces remain a profession distrusted by the majority of people in this country. In the *Daily Telegraph*, January 14th, there is the following account of the brass-hats getting together on this problem:

### "FEAR OF WAR IN FIVE MONTHS

#### "FIELD-MARSHAL LORD MILNE'S REMARK

##### " 'OPTIMISTIC' VIEW.

"Field-Marshal Lord Milne, speaking at the Mansion House last night, spoke of the threats of war in Europe, and added:

" 'Some optimistic people say we have five years to prepare. I would consider myself an optimist if I said you have five months from to-night.'

" 'The country is in danger,' he said, and he went on to emphasise the need for a population ready and trained in arms for the time when the call should come.

"He was addressing a dinner in aid of the London (City and County) and Middlesex Cadet Committee, presided over by the Lord Mayor, Sir George Broadbridge, and he appealed for £100,000 to assist the cadet movement.

"Lord Rochdale, a president of the Cadet Committee, proposing the Imperial Forces, said that in 1914 the Army was minute in size, but matchless in quality. 'But since the War we have cut it down and down in men, munitions and

The clerk and small business-man see the two things that they value most highly, security and the welfare of their children, threatened at the present time. They have been conditioned into the acceptance of a capitalist-imperialist society. But that acceptance depends upon the assurance of security. This class is now wavering, unsettled, unable to see clearly, but nevertheless sceptical about phrases like "a proud thing to belong to, and a still prouder thing to serve, our Empire, the greatest power for good that the world has ever seen." They don't feel the boiling indignation that Indians feel on reading phrases like that. But they know it's ballyhoo. The Nationalist Government has thrown over any policy that might mislead one to think that our Empire stood for justice in international affairs. We know that, if there is a war, we shan't be fighting for justice or for

equipment until it is a phantom of what it was even in 1914. And still, although we have cut it down, we cannot get the men to reach full establishment.

"If you want an army you must pay for it, and you must educate the young of this country to be ready to volunteer for service."

"Field-Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell, Chief of Imperial General Staff, praised the supporters of the cadet movement. They had been experiencing considerable difficulty with Army recruiting, and he felt that as regards both the Regular Army and the Territorials, the cadet movement should be regarded as a nursery which would be of the greatest value in an emergency."

"*'Education,'* he continued, *'does not cease when a man enters the Army. I even claim that the Army succeeds, in many cases, where the schools have failed.'*

"*'I do not hesitate to say that those who are responsible for the youth of this country are incurring a grave responsibility if they continue to preach—as many of them do—that love of country is reactionary, and service for it is degrading. Let them rather claim that it is a proud thing to belong to, and a still prouder thing to serve, our Empire, the greatest power for good that the world has ever seen.'* [My italics.]

"The Earl of Athlone, proposing the London (City and County) and Middlesex Cadet Committee, appealed to employers to grant the same facilities for boys to join the cadet movement as they allowed to the older young men to join the Territorials.

"Mr. A. Duff-Cooper, Secretary for War, said: 'We must teach the people of this country that everything that is valuable in this world must be defended, or else it will be lost. Most important of all—and this is a thing that seems to have been lost sight of in recent years—they must learn that the soldier is a man they should admire. They ought to look upon him as a protector—not as a man of blood, but a man of peace.'"

right, but "to defend what is valuable in this world," to safeguard our rights to exploit subject-races and guarantee to our rentier class the payment of their annual dividends.

By nature I hate violence in the settlement of public disputes. But I recognise that the nature of imperialism and of fascism demands the resort to force. I disapprove more of submitting to an armed tyranny than of standing firm against threats of force and meeting them if necessary with force. But I want the guarantee, if a war arose, that I was fighting not to protect foreign investments or make the fortunes of arms and boot manufacturers and Stock Exchange speculators, but that I was fighting to produce a society in which war would not occur as an inevitable consequence of the fight for fresh markets.

Apart from this attitude, there are only two which can be held. You can be an extreme pacifist, who refuses to fight under any circumstances; or you can be a nationalist, who believes in his country, right or wrong. But in the latter case, you must realise the implications of that position. We are a capitalist, imperialist nation. If we are called on to fight in a capitalist-imperialist war, we shall be fighting for capitalism and imperialism. We shall be fighting for the right to exploit and oppress. Such a war will benefit a minority of individuals, will plunge the majority into suffering and sorrow and will solve nothing. There is a great deal of talk in the Conservative Press about how we must keep out of an 'ideological' war. But in fact, if there is another war, it cannot help being 'ideological.' It will be fought for or against capitalism. It will result either in victory for socialism or for fascism, which is the final stage of

capitalism, wherein the pretence at liberty is discarded in favour of open force.

The reason why the brass-hats are getting worked up about education is that they are finding that the educational formula which kept people quiet in peacetime and sent them out to fight for their country in time of war is out-moded now. It no longer works. The sense of insecurity, of being unwanted even as a worker, pervades all except the most prosperous. The imminence of war gives rise not to a spirit of aggression, but to disgust at the incompetence of our rulers.

I began this chapter with the exposition of the strong forces, incorporated in our educational system, for the enforcement of the capitalist mentality. I described the efforts being made by socialist educationalists to combat these forces and shewed how puny they must be. And then I shewed that despite this power, the educational system was beginning to fail. The flaws in capitalist society go through its education. Both are out-of-date. They may still fight against the exponents of a new education and a new state. They are more powerful. But more powerful than them is the logic of history, the wedge of time.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Votes for Women*

"The market-place was already filled when we arrived with a large and amiably disposed crowd, which appeared to listen to our anxiously prepared speeches with much pleasure, and laughed at our mildest jokes. We felt considerably elated; it was not for some while that we noticed that the gentle ripple of laughter continued even when we were not trying to make jokes. We traced it at last to a placard which some wit had hung above our heads before we arrived, which read 'Blokes for Women.' "

—VISCOUNTESS RHONDDA, *This was My World.*

EVERY PERSON, especially in youth, has a capacity for devotion to interests other than their own. The young having observed in themselves the extraordinary changes effected by growth, hold the belief that human nature is not static or inalterable. They know it for fact. Remaining the same essential person, they have nevertheless already changed themselves in many different ways. The child of five, of ten, of fifteen and the young man of twenty may have been one body, one mind and one name: but he has been four different people. And unless he is badly tangled in some childish fixation, the fourth person, he knows, is the best so far. He looks back on his growth, and sees himself always gathering power, strength and courage: and he looks forward eagerly to his full maturity, his power developed in every sphere.

Youth has an organic view of reality. Its experience is growth, its health and hope is growth. It sees growth

as the law of the universe, exposed in the seasons of the year, in the rise and fall of forms of civilisation, growing, and coming to maturity and dying. And so people say, "Youth is hard." Because it accepts death, seeing it as a distant thing behind the hill of middle age, seeing it perhaps first as an ally who sweeps away old rivals.

Middle age and old age fear the growth, that means death soon. They want to put back the hands of the clock. They want to deny that there is change, that there is the dissolution of death. And in their fear they have tried to accumulate wealth, to keep them in comfort, to prolong their lives. With the accumulation of wealth a new fear comes, the fear of losing their pile, of being left to face old age in poverty. So they stand for the static view of life. Nothing will change, they make their prayer as a statement, there is nothing new under the sun. Human nature is inalterable, human forms cannot be changed.

There are two forms of government. There is the government which fights to resist change. This is a government of the aged, the government which is afraid of the progress of life, because for them life means death so soon. It is the government of those who have accumulated round themselves the instruments of power, wealth, property and the money-domination of the young. The young have strength, beauty and sexual potency. The old are infirm, crippled with gout, arterio-sclerosis and gallstones. The muscles of their bellies have grown slack, the skin of their necks is scrawny. They have many chins and the sex vigour has left them. All they have left are the money-bags, the command of high positions, the domination of government. And with these weapons they fight against the progress of life,



they fight against the young men and women who have all other advantages.

The second form of government is the government to assist change, which is the government by the young, by those who welcome life as bringing the increase of maturity, rather than the decrease of death. It is significant that the Government of the U.S.S.R. is the government of young men, while the Government of Great Britain is the government of old. The average age of their most active men is between thirty and forty. Our rulers do not reach supreme authority till they are of an age when they would have been superannuated from any other profession.

In a country governed by dotards there is continual danger from the young. Their energy, leaping up, must be directed somewhere or other: yet it finds no outlet in official life. Official life is reserved for those who have one foot in the grave. For this reason the government of the old will be safe only when the energies of the young are distracted towards some comparatively inessential issue.

Before the War this energy was directed towards Fabianism and the Suffrage Question. Both for women and for men, the question of women's suffrage was one of extraordinary importance. Round the agitation for this measure collected some of the most brilliant people of the day, and as the fight progressed, with the militant measures of the suffragettes on the one hand and the continual betrayals of the Liberal-Labour Coalition on the other, more and more people were drawn in. As a popular question, it was as universal as the weather and capable of releasing more emotion.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

To discuss the international situation, the rising power of the trade unions or the Irish question demanded some knowledge. But everybody was qualified to hold opinions on Women's Suffrage by his or her physiological constitution and relation to the opposite sex.

The basis of women's claim to the suffrage was the accepted rule that taxation meant representation. This was the argument brought up time and again in answer to all opposition. And it was an argument which was logically unanswerable.

The National Union for Women's Suffrage had been founded by Dame Millicent Fawcett, in 1897. Its methods were sweetly reasonable, orderly and, in the old sense, feminine. Its policy was to coax the vote from politicians, much as they might coax a fur coat from a husband after he had put through a good contract. A great deal of useful work was done for women by means of charm. But charm could not win the vote, perhaps because the Cabinet Ministers were afraid that when they had won the vote, women would cease to be so charming. Better to keep them in the perpetual state of coaxing.

In 1903 the Women's Social and Political Union was founded by the Pankhursts and the Pethick-Lawrences. This group was known variously as the 'Movement,' the 'Militants' and the 'Suffragettes,' as opposed to the law-abiding suffragists. Behind the movement was not only a different tactic, but a different philosophy. It was this philosophy even more than tactic which aroused such tremendous opposition that a Nonconformist minister referred indignantly in September, 1909, to "these termagants, these unsexed viragoes, these bipeds!"

The previous official nature of women had been

determined by men. Men wanted women to be weak, needing protection. In all business affairs they must be as children. (If they had not been, they might have detected a certain lack of probity in the acquisition of the family fortune.) By his position as husband and father, the man was to take that position of dominance which his own character would probably have been insufficient to gain. However stupid he might be, his superiority in educational facilities gave him the conviction of elevated wisdom. He was a little tyrant back in his home at Wandsworth or Hammersmith, however much he was bullied in the office. He didn't mind giving way to his wife or daughters, provided that he was coaxed, wheedled and flattered. But to renounce all right to the economic and emotional tyranny which he wielded over his family, to give them liberty as a right instead of as a reward for ruffling his hair and titillating his male pride was another matter. It struck at the divine right of his kingship in the home. It made him mere man, and, he feared, mere fool.

"Remember the dignity of your womanhood," said Christabel Pankhurst. "Do not appeal; do not beg; do not grovel. Take courage, join hands, stand beside us, fight with us."

It was the more infuriating that these "unsexed viragoes, these bipeds" did not, in fact, want "Blokes for Women." They were smartly dressed, so smartly in fact that people complained, you couldn't tell the difference between a pretty woman and a suffragette. They weren't a pack of roaring Lesbians, but a collection of women by whom it would have been very nice to be coaxed in a Dame Millicent Fawcett way. But they wouldn't coax. They had read their Ibsen, *Mrs.*

*Warren's Profession* and at least the Preface to *Plays Unpleasant*. They demanded as a right the freedom which it had been delightful to promise them in return for a smile.

Of course, even among women there were those prepared to fight for their own slavery. The Dowager Countess of Jersey and Mrs. Humphry Ward started an Anti-Suffragist Society: and they were assisted in their work by the independent Gertrude Bell, when she could spare the time off from doing a man's work in the East. Mr. Arnold Ward, speaking in the House of Commons, described his mother and her colleagues as "these noble women who have emerged only to retire are agitating against the cause of female agitation, and by the garrulity of the moment are purchasing the silence of a lifetime." (Speech on the Second Reading of the Conciliation Bill, July, 1901.)

The W.S.P.U. at first decided upon the tactics of passive resistance. One after another they were arrested and thrown into prison, very often after severe manhandling by hooligans and police. Their trials, intended to be their exposure, became the scenes of skilful attacks on the authorities, not only on the question of women's suffrage, but on the treatment of prisoners in court and in jail. In 1908, when Mrs. Pankhurst, her daughter Christabel and 'General' Drummond were prosecuted for issuing an appeal to suffragettes to 'rush' the House of Commons, Christabel summoned Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Herbert Gladstone, Home Secretary, as witnesses. Max Beerbohm, describing the scene in the *Saturday Review*, wrote: "His (Mr. Lloyd George's) Celtic fire burned very low; and the contrast between the buoyance of the girl and the

depression of the statesman was almost painful. Youth and ideal, on the one hand, and on the other, middle age and illusions left over."

The prosecution put forward only two witnesses against her, and those both police officers (a method of prosecution which is not obsolete, especially in political trials). Christabel Pankhurst, in her defence, said:

"It seems to me that the prosecution, the witnesses, the authorities, the magistrates, are all on one side; they are all in the same box, and the prisoner charged with an offence is absolutely helpless whatever facts he may bring forward. It is indeed a waste of time to bring evidence. Over the doors of this Court ought to stand the motto, 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here.' We do not care for ourselves, because imprisonment means nothing to us; but when we think of the thousands of helpless creatures who come into this monstrous place with nobody to help them, nobody to plead for them, and we know perfectly well that they are found guilty before they have a chance of defending themselves, the injustice that is done in this Court is almost too horrible to contemplate. I am thankful to think that we have been able, by submitting ourselves to the absurd proceedings that are here conducted, to ventilate this fearful wrong."

When Christabel Pankhurst said that imprisonment meant nothing to suffragettes, she made if anything an understatement. Turning the law against itself, the militants were proud of their imprisonments. They were confirmed in their militancy by prison, just as a criminal is confirmed in his crime.

Mrs. Ray Strachey gives the following account of the treatment of militants after trial:

"Once in prison the suffragists by no means ceased to be militant. From the first they had protested that they ought to be treated as political prisoners, and moreover they had made accusations and revelations about the ordinary prison routine

## THE CHANGING SCENE

which greatly angered the authorities.<sup>1</sup> They now devised a further method of annoyance (1909), and as soon as they reached the cells they refused to eat their food. Forcible feeding was tried in vain; the prisoners struggled so violently against it that the process became actually dangerous, and the prison officials were obliged to let them starve till they came to the edge of physical collapse, and then to let them go. In spite of the severe pain and damage to health which this process involved, scores of suffragette prisoners adopted it, and the passing of sentences upon them became a farce. The officials tried everything they could think of in vain; and sometimes their severities went so far that they took effect upon the public imagination, and roused real anger outside. Such a case occurred when on a freezing night the hose was turned on a recalcitrant prisoner who was then left all night, wet as she was, in an unwarmed cell. An even worse case, however, occurred in 1910. A year before, Lady Constance Lytton joined the Women's Social and Political Union and suffered arrest in one of their raids. On being taken to Holloway she was declared to be too delicate to endure ordinary prison discipline, as indeed she was; and in spite of her earnest efforts to be treated like the rest she had been taken to the Infirmary and released before the expiry of her sentence. A second time in the same year she was arrested in Newcastle, and a second time accorded the same treatment; and she began to think her name and influential friends were the cause. Her third imprisonment, therefore, was undertaken in disguise. Under the name of Jane Wharton she went to Liverpool, and there, by throwing a stone, she secured arrest in January, 1910. This time no careful medical examination followed. With the other prisoners she went to the cells, where she began her hunger-strike and was forcibly fed; and it was not till the secret of her identity came out that her condition was noticed. She was then at once released 'on medical grounds,' but the damage was done. Lady Constance was an invalid from that day until she died,

<sup>1</sup> It is part of the technique of fighting political opposition in this country to treat political prisoners as criminals. It is considered that such treatment will degrade their political professions in the eyes of the public and the effect on sensitive prisoners is sometimes enough to incapacitate them from further political life. (*Vide* W. Gallacher's *Revolt on the Clyde* and Macartney's *Walls have Mouths*.) But even this manoeuvre can be turned against the authorities, since political prisoners are thereby given an insight into the cruelty and injustice of our prison system: more grist to the mill.

## VOTES FOR WOMEN

a true martyr to the Cause. And a great many people were furiously and justly indignant."

The technique of the militant movement was to attract public attention to itself and to force all members of the public to have opinions one way or another. Having made the public suffrage-conscious, the movement had then to win sympathy for the suffragettes and alienate sympathy from the Government. The Press as a whole were opposed to the movement: and individual journalists like Nevinson and Brailsford, who shewed active sympathy with the militants, thereby endangered their livelihoods. More and more spectacular and sensational acts were necessary for the suffragettes to reach the general public. Lady Constance Lytton being forcibly fed and injured for life was good propaganda. If Lady Constance Lytton had been, in fact, Jane Wharton, nobody would have taken any notice. The Government learnt this lesson apparently. H. W. Nevinson relates a meeting held at the base of the statue of Richard Cœur de Lion outside the St. Stephen's entrance to the House of Commons. He, Henry Harben, Laurence Housman and Francis Meynell were arrested in the company of Mrs. D. A. Thomas (later Dowager Viscountess Rhondda) and Miss Haig. When the men refused to be bound over for six months in a surety of £5, they were led into a cell. But finding that the wealthy Mrs. D. A. Thomas also refused to be bound over, the magistrate communicated with the Home Office and discharged all parties.

Where rank was missing, numbers counted. After the notorious 'torpedoing' of the Reform Bill by Lloyd George, the militant movement advanced to a further stage of action. Things had been quiet for some time

previously. The suffragettes had been bribed into good conduct during the Coronation by promises of reform. But in 1913 it became obvious that nothing was to be expected from the Liberal Party, despite its promises and its avowed policy of freedom and progress. Attacks on property followed, these attacks being justified as the necessary means of obtaining a hearing. Viscountess Rhondda gives an amusing account of an aunt of hers, whose greatest interest in life was her garden, but who was impelled to go to London for 'the cause' and smash a window in Swan and Edgar's. This lady, who had been brought up to respect property all her life, said that when she smashed that window, she smashed very much more, her whole view of life.

As the suffragette attacks increased in cunning and violence, the Government defence increased in cunning and brutality. The Cat and Mouse Act was passed, enabling the Home Secretary to release a suffragette on ticket-of-leave as soon as her hunger-strike became dangerous. But as soon as she recovered, she would be rearrested without a fresh warrant and made to serve the remainder of her sentence.

This act, framed by Mr. Richard McKenna, was ingeniously savage. Of course, it was mild in comparison to the methods which we were using in the Empire to tyrannise over subject-races. It was mild compared to the barbarous methods we later employed in Ireland. But for its time and its place, it was sufficiently callous to provoke the exact opposite of the effect it intended.

Mrs. Pankhurst, for example, went to Holloway Gaol on April 3rd. She refused to be examined by the doctor and began a hunger-and-thirst strike at once. While



she lay there, growing weaker and weaker, demonstrations were held outside the prison and in Hyde Park. More and more of her followers were arrested and followed her example when they joined her in prison. On April 12th, being in danger of her life, she was released for fifteen days on ticket-of-leave. On April 9th she had scribbled two cards to Ethyl Smyth, believing that she would never survive. Ethyl Smyth visited her at 'Lady' Pine's nursing-home, where she went on leaving Holloway. "When I went to see her . . .," writes Ethyl Smyth, "detectives were on the watch all round the house. She was heartrending to look on, her skin yellow, and so tightly drawn over her face that you wondered the bone structure did not come through; her eyes deep sunken and burning, and a deep flush on her cheeks. With horror I then became acquainted with one physical result of hunger-striking that still haunts me. It is due, I suppose, to the body feeding on its own tissue; anyhow, the strange, pervasive, sweetish odour of corruption that hangs about a room in which a hunger-striker is being nursed back to health is unlike any other smell. I often hoped that Mrs. Pankhurst, the most meticulously dainty of beings, had no idea of this sinister effect of hunger-striking, and am glad to believe she hadn't, for she would have minded that more than anything."<sup>1</sup>

Though she was released ostensibly only for fifteen days, she was not rearrested, then. Three weeks later she slipped out of the nursing-home to Ethyl Smyth's house. The detectives followed and sat in the rain in the shelter of a gorse bush opposite the wicket gate. When she had sufficiently recovered, Mrs. Pankhurst ordered

<sup>1</sup> Dame Ethyl Smyth, *Female Pipings in Eden*.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

the Union car, got into it and drove to Woking Police Station with the detectives, and thence by police car to Holloway.

This second imprisonment lasted only five days. She was released again on May 30th. The next day, Emily Wilding Davidson threw herself under the feet of the horses at the Derby and was killed.

Only a few days out of prison, Mrs. Pankhurst tried to walk in Miss Davidson's funeral; but she was re-arrested and taken to Holloway again. This time she refused not only to eat and drink, but also to sleep. She was released in three days.

So it went on. Imprisonment, release, recovery, and the resumption of militant work under danger of re-arrest. With extraordinary ingenuity, Mrs. Pankhurst succeeded in evading the police, speaking where she had announced she would speak and slipping away before she could be arrested. She was imprisoned a fourth time and released. She joined her daughter Christabel in Paris, then went to U.S.A. to collect funds and was detained on Ellis Island as an undesirable alien. Wherever she was, the persecution continued. But it made no difference. However much it may have damaged Mrs. Pankhurst's health, her courage and persistence won the admiration of the general public and strengthened her followers in their resolve to share her fortunes.

The leaders of the movement were all people of remarkable integrity and intelligence. Mrs. Pankhurst was perhaps the finest meeting speaker, capable of controlling any audience, however rowdy, by the extraordinary range of her voice and charm of her personality. Christabel, though her greatest talent lay

in the organisation of the party and its tactics, was also a speaker of the first rank. The genius of Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence resided in her power to extract large sums of money from fashionable audiences at the Albert Hall, while the legal and expository powers of her husband made him an invaluable ally.

But quite apart from the charm and ability of the leaders, the 'Movement' offered to young women a new way of life, an outlet for the energy that was stifled in their domestic lives. Viscountess Rhondda describes this emotional appeal in some detail in *This was My World*. She came from an intelligent and wealthy family. As a matter of course, she with the rest of her family believed that women ought to have the vote. But it was not till she met her cousin, Florence Haig, who had just left prison, that she felt the need and desire to *fight* for the vote. The whole movement excited her. It made her study, not only the documents of the movement, but wider political, economic and sociological issues. Working for the movement was an extension of her education. It gave purpose to her life, taking her from the audience and placing her on the stage. It needed courage to go into a small country-town and hire a cart and set it up in the square and talk about women's suffrage. But she learnt to organise and speak in public. A lot of the work was fatiguing and monotonous, but it brought the conviction of being worth while. And furthermore, the sense of comradeship, cemented by persecution, removed from her the sense of isolation that so many intellectuals feel.

At first, she admits, the appeal was purely emotional. The terms of the conflict fitted in with the need of her life. It was only later that she learnt enough to

rationalise her motivation, and trace her joy to the quality of the purpose.

I think that Lady Rhondda was mistaken in identifying the joy of working in company for an object with the object itself. What was satisfying was not women's suffrage, but working for women's suffrage.<sup>1</sup> This, I think, was the primary importance of the movement, the manner in which it developed the characters of the suffragettes themselves, the emancipation of a group through experience. It was that which attracted women to the movement. "For me," Viscountess Rhondda writes, "and for many other young women like me, militant suffrage was the very salt of life. The knowledge of it had come like a draught of fresh air into our padded, stifled lives. It gave us release of energy; it gave us that sense of being some use in the scheme of things, without which no human being can live at peace. It made us feel that we had a real purpose and use apart from having children. . . ."

The government of old men cannot cope with "that sense of being some use in the scheme of things, without which no human being can live at peace." It is something which they try to stifle. It is dangerous, if it has no outlet. It may be dangerous if it has the wrong outlet.<sup>2</sup> But when it is politically educated, as it is being educated at the moment by Marxist and socialist teachers, it becomes a solid and irrefragable force, that

<sup>1</sup> Because the militant suffrage movement was a way of life, rather than a fully planned political movement, we see with what ease all this energy was diverted from agitation to war-work in 1914 and onwards. The War offered the same emotional outlets of co-operation, self-sacrifice and aggression.

<sup>2</sup> Fascism has realised this social energy of youth and is using it in the service of capitalism, in the same way in which the Government uses the energy of the suffragettes during the War. It is because fascism used this force that it appears at first to be revolutionary and only reveals its adherence to capitalism at a later stage. It is a case of setting revolutionaries to suppress revolution.

will not be misled. Before the War, the old men could feel fairly safe, because the movement of youth was directed to the unpolitical squabble of the equality of the sexes.<sup>1</sup> But to-day the question has come nearer to them. It is whether or not they are capable of running the state efficiently and the young men and women of to-day know what is the answer.

<sup>1</sup> The one important achievement of the sex-equality movement has been to provide women to do the work that was formerly done by men at a woman's wage. This innovation, made of necessity during the War, has been eagerly sponsored by employers, who welcome any change which will send down the cost of production. The effects on the home life of the workers, where the husband is out of work and has to take over all the woman's functions that he is physiologically capable of taking over, are not estimated by employers. A continuation of this state of affairs, however, may turn our social system inside out. The woman may become the dominant breadwinner, the husband the docile stay-at-home, washing the nappies, bathing the babies and doing the cooking. The man's place in the home will be the new cry. Until men, being inferior, will be called in to undercut the labour of their brawny, skilful women.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Social Sense*

"There's something deficient in you, certainly. You aren't complete in yourself. There's some experience still needed to stabilise you. But there's something deficient in society, too. All jobs ought to be interesting. But they aren't, and nothing could make them, under the present conditions. Part of the interest of any job is in its function, but if its function is perverted, as the proper function of all jobs is perverted, then the interest is perverted too. And unless you develop the same perverted interest, the job will kill you—or oust you."—RANDALL SWINGLER, *No Escape*.

IN PREVIOUS chapters I have dealt with the cultural instruments of modern England. I have shewn that those instruments which are costly to construct and use are in the hands of powerful financial interests and that these instruments are employed to condition people into the acceptance of the capitalist system. The conception that what is 'popular' must be vulgarised and bad must be revised, since it has appeared that the word 'popular' does not mean what the people want, but what the people is given. The principle of vulgarisation has been seen to spring not from the needs of the poor, but from the policy of the rich. Lords Northcliffe, Rothermere and Beaverbrook are not giving way to a degraded public taste, but are degrading public taste as part of their economic and political planning.

I have shewn that books, which demand less financial backing, and the struggling opposition organs of propaganda, can appeal not to public ignorance and superstition, but to intelligence and other-regarding feelings.

## THE SOCIAL SENSE

In the previous chapter I have outlined briefly the movement for Women's Suffrage, choosing for admiration the discipline and the passion of their agitation and for censure, the lack of political direction. In this present chapter I want to analyse the state of mind which lay behind the suffrage movement and which lies behind the present international, socialist movements.

Man exists in two important relations. He is an individual, whose experience is unique, whose knowledge of the world depends upon *his* brain and no other's, whose life cannot persist without its functioning independently of all other bodies. In the first five years of life this man has been absorbed almost entirely in his own functions. He has been egocentric: and it is right that he should have been, since he has had so much to learn. The difficulties of speech, movement, etc., have occupied his whole time. He has probably been aggressive, anxious to shew his powers, and if they are not recognised, to make them plain by being a nuisance to adults. He has been unselfconscious, proud of what he can do that others can't, amused at wearing extraordinary clothes, liking to draw, to dance, to tell stories.

But after this infantile period comes a period of eclipse, the 'latency' period as it is called, during which originality seems to disappear. Parents are often disappointed during this period because the child that they thought was going to prove a genius suddenly turns into a very ordinary schoolboy. What is happening is that the child is becoming aware of a new centre of life. There are other people in the world beside himself. He must effect a contact with them, must conform to the pattern of their lives. The aggressive individualist,

therefore, gives place to the social imitator. Excellence now is not difference from the group, but conformity with the group. The games preferred are team games, rather than the solitary pleasures of the imagination. Team games give the child a chance for being exceptional in an ordinary way. So does classwork.

Prior to the age of puberty, therefore, a child has come face to face with the two problems, on the solution of which depends his happiness. He has to develop himself to the fullest extent, but at the same time he must effect a social contact with his fellows.

The time from puberty to maturity is probably the most difficult and unhappy in most people's lives. The adolescent has the desires and ambitions of an adult without the means of satisfying them. Unless he can find some compensation in games and classwork, his prevailing emotion will be one of uselessness and impotence. Something is wrong. He doesn't know what it is. When he grows up, he hopes that it'll stop being wrong.

Part of his problem is soluble in a personal way. His unrest and unhappiness is due to sexual repression in its broadest sense. Neither love nor desire find their outlet: unless, that is, the child is turned to homosexuality, as so many are by our school system.

Many people never solve this first, personal, problem. They may marry and have children, and yet their lives may be empty and without love. The love passes into boredom, the first joy goes and nothing takes its place. Yet they remain married, living in the same house, lying in the same bed, hating one another, or bored with one another. The emotional satisfaction that they had looked forward to receiving from life,



they now seek only in imagination. The children that they dreamed were to be the perfect children, loving their parents, real good friends, turn out to be no good. They have lives of their own which they cannot communicate to their fathers or mothers. As soon as they come in the house, the joy goes from their faces. They are sulky and often rude. They do not say what they are thinking about. The sexual act and the fruit of the sexual act have both proved bitter. There is nothing left but habit and imagination, the hard sterility of actual life and the curious excitement of dreams. It is a drab picture, but it is true. More marriages are like this than are not. And the men and women go to their graves with the first problem of personal happiness as far from solution as it was at birth.

It is false, however, to isolate this problem from the second one. They are interrelated and they interact. This is the second problem. It presents itself first in the nursery. There are two children, and there is one toy which each wants. Who is to have it? If A takes it from B, B makes a fuss, and, anyway, A doesn't really enjoy playing with it because he feels guilty (unless, that is, the chief reason for A taking it was to make B unhappy). The only solution that can succeed, and even this doesn't always succeed, is that either A and B should play with it together, or they should each play with it for a specified time. (Or alternatively, if the children differ in ages, the elder child may be persuaded to surrender the toy to the younger, because he has greater self-control and powers of self-denial.)

This problem recurs again and again in later life, only of course in much more complex forms. It is not confined to the relation of one individual to another.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

It embraces the relation of the individual to everyone he meets: and goes even further, to include the relation of the individual to larger groups of which he knows only individual members, that is to say, to classes, to nations and to the whole world. Furthermore, the individual is no longer commanded or bidden to make a choice: he has to do that himself. He is now a moral agent.

In a love relationship there are and must be two elements, love and hate. It is impossible to love deeply without at times hating equally deeply. What ruins many marriages is that husbands and wives veil their hatred. They refuse to acknowledge the primitive, unconscious hatred that accompanies their love: and when they shew it at all, it is rationalised as a loathing of petty faults. A story I read somewhere seems to me to comprise this ridiculous element in modern marriage. After two people had been married about ten years, the husband felt vaguely that there was something wrong. But he didn't know what it was. He could fix it down to nothing positive. Then one day he realised. When his wife pulled the lavatory plug, she never flushed out all the paper. There was always some scrap of dirty paper floating in the pan. "How filthy, how disgusting," he thought, "and how typical." So he pulled the plug and walked out of her life.

The only false note in that story seemed to me the ending. He wouldn't have pulled the plug. But he would have gone on every two or three days, swearing at this unfortunate incapacity. He would never have mentioned his annoyance to her, because he would have considered it too delicate a subject. But each time he had reason to be alone he would look for that horrible

index of slovenliness. And if it wasn't there, he would be almost disappointed.

In love relations modern men and women are all too sloppy and yielding. They want it to be all love and no hate: and it becomes nothing at all. D. H. Lawrence picked on this failure of modern sex-relationships and worried at it from every angle. As he saw it, it was the centre flaw of our civilisation and could be isolated. As I see it, it cannot be isolated without falsification. It is part of a larger pattern.

Opposed to the sloppy, all kiss and no slap, love life of the modern man is his economic life. This is fighting. On the surface it's very jolly and you call one another by your Christian names perhaps, and stand one another drinks and meals and give presents at Christmas, but underneath it is fighting. Or if it isn't, you get stung. Within the firm there is jealousy and suspicion and the desire to get on. You may like the chap above you, but you'd like his job even better. If he falls down and breaks his neck you can go to his funeral, but you've got to look alive to see that someone else doesn't get his job while you're doing it. And the firm itself is in competition with other firms of the same type within the country: and however friendly the respective managing directors may be when they meet in the club, each is out to get as many contracts away from the other as he can. Yet just as the mutually suspicious employees get together somehow in competition against other mutually suspicious employees, so groups of employers get together to compete against other groups, either that is to stamp out smaller competitors or steal the foreign trade of other countries.

There have got to be no flies on the modern business

## THE CHANGING SCENE

man. He may vary his tactics, now joke, now fawn, now lie. But he must fight all the time. That's why so many hard-boiled business men are sugar-daddies. All day long it's a fight that makes all-in wrestling look like ring-a-ring-a-roses: so in the evening, it has to be itsy-bitsy cuddle-a-cutey.

The wretched wives have no outlet, unless they gossip or play bridge. Their natural aggressive instincts have to be turned back on themselves. Gentleness is the price that they pay for their keep. If they have the money they end up either on the psycho-analyst's sofa or taking cruises and lovers up the Amazon. If they haven't, they have to lump it.

The competitive system can thus be seen to have a direct bearing on the domestic lives of those living under this system. D. H. Lawrence, though he attacked the problem from the individual psychological angle, was in fact attacking the economic position at the same time. Many Lawrencians have, for this reason, advanced to the stage of social criticism, seeing that the psychological relationship which Lawrence advocated as healthy between men and women cannot be realised, except by a few people the nature of whose employment keeps them fairly free from the worst effects of competition.

Let us for a moment forget what is the relation of man to man under capitalism: and examine instead what conditions should be most favourable for the necessities of production and the amenities of social intercourse. We must abandon first the concentration of interest on money. The artist is always taken as the example of the man, whose primary interest is in his

work and whose secondary interest is the reward he gets for that work. He is very often considered to be almost unique in having this commonsense view of production. But I think that this is wrong. Most men who deal with the production of goods have this pride in their products to a greater or lesser degree. It is only the pressure of the present system, the anxiety and insecurity it breeds among all who work under it, that turns the interest at last to the making of money as the primary interest.

Even under capitalism co-operation is necessary for the production and marketing of goods. The producer cannot carry out his work without the co-operation of the transport worker and the distributor. All that is good in the complex system of production and distribution springs from the co-operative and not the competitive spirit.

Some reader may object to this. He may say: "Co-operation is necessary for the smooth working of production and marketing. But competition is equally important to prevent co-operation being used for raising prices. Monopoly capitalism has brought co-operation to a point where competition is eliminated as a check on prices: and you find that prices are immediately raised, very often to make the home market pay for the conquest of markets abroad."

I agree with this. Under a system of production for profit the calls to co-operation are always illusory. Co-operation in this case is merely an alliance to get more money out of the public, rather than to provide the public with better or cheaper or more numerous commodities. It is possible, and even likely, that a larger production unit will be able to produce better

## THE CHANGING SCENE

commodities at a lower price. But that is not the primary object of mergers and monopolies. The primary object is to secure bigger profits for the section of the public which holds shares in the companies, not to benefit the community as a whole.

Another reader may object: "The spirit of competition is essential to human happiness. You have been talking about the nursery. Well, think of the competition between children. I'm taller than you, stronger than you and so on. The comparative is the measure of human well-being, not the positive."

This is a psychological argument, based on the familiar assumption that economics and psychology are necessarily in conflict. It assumes also that not only are the fundamental desires of human nature immutable, but also the forms in which those desires find expression are immutable. This assumption becomes ridiculous to anyone who has any knowledge of communities other than our own. Capitalism appeals to and draws on certain psychological mechanisms in the same way that cannibalism does. But though cannibalism and capitalism are similar in many ways, (cf. the practice of cannibalism with the hard-boiled business man's "Dog eats dog"), their forms are different. The fleshpot is superseded by the bankruptcy court.

In the U.S.S.R. allowance has been made for this spirit of competition. It is, in fact, used as one of the strongest social mechanisms, instead of being one of the most anti-social. The competition there is not between workers who want to oust one another from jobs, but between those who want to produce more. Wall newspapers apportion praise and blame. Each factory is in competition with the other, not to smash the other and

put it out of business, but to be more efficient. To many people working under capitalism it seems impossible (and for some reason infantile) that men should compete in their work, not for higher wages, but for honour. Yet, peculiarly enough, these same people look back to the old Olympic Games, where the reward was just a crown of bays, not with amused contempt, but with nostalgic admiration.

From an economic point of view, the co-operation of productive and distributive forces for the good of society as a whole is not only a better form of organisation than production for the good of certain sections in society: but is in fact the only way in which production and consumption can be approximately equated. From a psychological point of view, all the essential primitive desires that find their expression in the chaos of capitalism can be utilised in the process of building socialism. And in addition to that, the social sense can be reconciled to self-interest. And this is the true subject of the present chapter.

At the present time, the good of the individual cannot help being opposed to the good of society. This truth is particularised in such judgments as "Revolutionaries should not marry." By examining this particular judgment, we can see the application of the general.

A revolutionary may be led into his opposition to society by a number of personal motives and experiences. But by the time that he reaches maturity he has been forced into the position of formulating a theory of justice. The idea of justice is essentially other-regarding. Notions of self-interest, or sectional interest, cannot enter into any idealist theory of justice. To the revolutionary,

who is a realist, however, the justice with which he is concerned is the justice administered within and without the courts of law. He finds that this law and practice is framed in the interest of the ruling class, in order to perpetuate an economic system which is outworn. He reads, disciplines and educates himself so that he can understand the course which the change to socialism will take: and he works peaceably—for who would employ violence when inferior in armed force?—to persuade others to co-operate with him in helping to change society. Under a tyranny, such a change can only be brought about by force of arms, at a time when the people are given arms, as in war. Under a democracy, however, it is possible and necessary to work within the framework of the constitution. The revolutionary, however, knows that even when he has won power by constitutional means, he is liable to encounter every form of opposition from sabotage to revolution and foreign intervention (*vide* Spain). He knows also that before his party is able to reach power, he may be thrown into prison and penalised in various economic and social ways. His dependants may, therefore, be subject to anxiety, penury and semi-starvation. The revolutionary worker is therefore faced with a dilemma: either he must sacrifice the interests of society to the interests of his family, or the interests of his family to those of society. His duties are incompatible.

The position of the socialist differs from that of the non-socialist only in degree. The same problem besets every man in modern England. Either he is going to look out for himself and his dependants, and the devil take the hindmost, or he is going to be penalised. If he is an independent worker, his position is not so bad.



But if he works for an employer, he has to rely entirely on the unity of his fellow-workers for preservation of his job. If he is on the dole, or Public Assistance, every effort will be made to prevent him from taking part in political work, on the pretext that he should spend his whole time looking for work. There is, in fact, no reason why an unemployed man should not do political work in his spare time (i.e. in the time not spent in looking for work that isn't there). Public Assistance Committees have no authority to penalise a man for political activity. But they are not above using a threat to exercise powers which they have not got. On every level the threat is the same: though the strength of the threat may differ. "Conform, accept things as they are, and things will go easier for you. Stand out for justice in its most elementary form and you will be a marked man. You will be deprived of your job, if possible: and once out of work, you will be kept out as long as possible."

The sign of a healthy society is that it is capable of using its best men. By best men I mean the men with the finest brains, the greatest artistic ability, the highest moral qualities. A society like that of England to-day has these men in opposition, either militant or quiescent. The issues have become clearer than before the War. In 1912, artists were in opposition to the existing state of affairs. But they did not see the issues clearly. All but a very few were swept into the War of 1914 on the catchword of the "War to end War." The avowed pacifists, whose position was based on humanitarianism, rather than constructive economics, were carried away on the same tide. They absorbed with a strange naïvete the propaganda stories, the outworn atrocities and the

jingo references to 'our brave boys,' the unfortunate victims of misguided patriotism.

To-day, war preparations in England are even greater than they were before the last war. Between 1932 and the beginning of 1936 expenditure on the Navy increased by 42 per cent. In the five years before the War the increase was 52 per cent. In the five years before 1936 Army costs increased by 16 per cent. In the five years before the War the increase was 6 per cent. On the top of this is the huge expenditure on the Air Arm, for which there is no pre-War parallel. And finally, as the prospect for the future, comes the Government's announcement of an arms loan of £400,000,000 over and above the estimated annual expenditure of £200,000,000 on armament and the maintenance of armed forces.

And to-day, anti-war feeling is correspondingly stronger than it was before the last war. It is not confined to intellectuals. It is the common interest of the middle and working classes. Whatever the economic differences between the interests of these two classes, they are united in the hatred of war, and of the fascist powers, whose aggressive policy has destroyed the peace of Europe.

A small section of these war-protesters believes in the policy of passive resistance by non-violence. This policy was practised in India by the followers of Gandhi: and Mr. Richard Gregg has quoted gruesome accounts of this policy in action. The idea underlying non-violence is that if you offer no resistance to force, you inspire shame in the aggressor, who then joins your side and becomes raised to your moral plane. This policy, as we have already seen, was pursued by the suffragettes. But it

was not the policy of non-violence which gained women the vote. It was their services during the War. It was not the policy of non-violence that enabled women to keep many of the positions which they had held for the first time during the War, it was the fact that they worked for a lower wage than men and so could be used to cheapen labour costs and also to force men to work for lower wages.

The policy of non-violence can be used as a form of protest against a government which rules by force. (The Indians, for example, are able to force the British Raj into certain concessions by this means.) But the policy cannot succeed in gaining power for the non-resisters. (The Indians will have to use force to expel the British from India.)

As practical politics the policy is fantastic. It is actually playing into the hands of fascist aggression. Hitler's policy is avowedly to isolate the sphere of conflict: to bind the hands of the rest of Europe, while he seizes the small portion he has chosen to annex. He is following this policy at the moment of my writing, by giving his assent to the proposals of the non-intervention committee and ignoring his own promises. He has England and France bound to non-intervention, while he and Mussolini supply the puppet General, Franco, with aid on land and air and sea. The policy of non-resistance can advocate nothing except that we in England should sit still and vow that if Hitler invaded England, we would turn the other cheek and thus raise his troops to a higher moral plane.

During the invasion of Malaga by the allied fascist forces, Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell refused to leave his villa. He had always spent the winter there, and he

## THE CHANGING SCENE

didn't see why he shouldn't do so this winter, the same as usual. He seems to have acted as a good non-political non-resister. This is what happened to him, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, a paper which is certainly in sympathy with the fascist forces, rather than with the Government.

### "RESCUE OF SIR PETER CHALMERS MITCHELL

#### "ALLEGED DEATH THREATS

*"Gibraltar, Friday.*

"It is reported here that a patrol from the British destroyer, *Basilisk*, saved the life of Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, the famous British biologist and former secretary of the Zoological Society, who arrived here from Malaga yesterday.

"Sir Peter is stated to have told friends in Gibraltar that as soon as the Nationalists entered Malaga they arrested him and took him to the Caleta Palace Hotel, where he was to have been shot without trial. Several times he was threatened with revolvers, but, according to reports, simply said to his guards, 'Kindly direct that revolver elsewhere.'

"When H.M.S. *Basilisk* arrived at Malaga, her commander, accompanied by a patrol from the warship, went to the hotel and demanded Sir Peter's release. This, it is stated, was granted *on condition that he did not describe what happened in Malaga when the Nationalists entered.*

"The three Nationalist courts-martial which are sitting in Malaga to-day tried 36 prisoners, mostly Civil Guards, who were members of the 'Red Committee.' The courts sentenced 27 to death, four to life imprisonment and one to six years' imprisonment. Four were acquitted."

In this case, Sir Peter owes his life to two considerations. His courage and self-possession prevented him being shot before the arrival of H.M.S. *Basilisk*. The implied threat of British intervention by force, unless Sir Peter was released, procured his liberty.

In an ideal world non-resistance would be effective. But in an ideal world it would be unnecessary.

The realisation of this is driving more and more people into a realistic consideration of what must be done in event of war. These people realise the horror and barbarity of any sort of war. But they also realise that unless the fascist bluff is called and a strong stand is made against the violation of international obligations, a succession of small, isolated wars is inevitable. In each case, as has already happened in Manchuria and Abyssinia, the weaker and more pacific nation will be conquered and utilised as a base for further aggression. They realise that France and England, as imperial nations, are both in false positions, in relation to the optative empires of Italy and Germany. But they see no solution of the colonial problem in the handing over of subject-nations to be exploited by Italy and Germany, as they have been by France and England. The solution lies instead in the independence of colonies and their freedom from exploitation. ;

The reader will object: "You say that the present system of government either forces the best men in the state into opposition, or into defeatist attitudes such as that of the non-resister. On the other hand, we have a democratic machine in this country. Why is it that the Nationalist Government is so consistently returned to power?"

There are two answers to this question. I have dealt with the first already in some detail. The weakness of our electoral system has always been that the electorate is liable to be stampeded. The two appeals to the electorate are through fear or through reason. The influence of fear is the stronger: up to a certain point.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

Fear of the unknown will not be overruled until the disgust at the known reaches a climax. Baldwin, a consummate tactician, is a master of stampede elections. He engineered the 1931 landslide, and picked the autumn of 1935 for the general election. If he had chosen a time a few months earlier, the Government majority would have been substantially reduced. If he had delayed a few months longer, the Government majority would have been lost utterly.

But in addition to this principle of stampede (which is, of course, the reversal of democracy, the degradation of the people into a temperamental mob), the party-leaders of the Left have shewn themselves too hesitant to take advantage of the strong desire for unity, which exists among the rank and file. The Liberal Party (that section of it, at least, which is truly liberal in tradition, the men of good will) desires unity with the official Labour Party, and the militant elements which have in the past been expelled from the Labour Party, the I.L.P., the Communist Party and the Socialist League. The Labour Party holds the key to unity. The Trade Union Movement is the bulwark of the Labour Party and must form the centre of any organisation of the Left. Unfortunately, the Trade Union Movement, which was started for the purpose of fighting for the rights of the workers, has become enmeshed in its own complex machinery. The trade union leaders hold their positions, almost absolutely. They wield tremendous power in virtue of their positions, yet the votes which they cast as representatives of the workers are not representative of the feelings of the rank and file. Within the movement to-day there is widespread unrest and disagreement with the officials. Yet it is almost

impossible to supplant the present leaders by those who represent the truer feelings of the majority.<sup>1</sup> The Trade Union Movement under its present leadership has come to stand on the side of the employers, rather than on the side of the employees. They form their own plutocracy, the chosen company of those who have betrayed their fellows. In U.S.A., where contrasts are more striking, they would be labour racketeers. In England they are the darlings of the *Morning Post*.

There is a peculiar parallel between the position within the Labour Movement and the position in Parliament. The Nationalist Government has no active opposition in Parliament. The opposition comes from outside, from demonstrations and popular resolutions. The Peace Ballot and the protests launched by the branches of the League of Nations Union against the Hoare-Laval peace terms had more influence on the Government than any speeches made in opposition. Unfortunately this method of mobilising opposition is incapable of having more than a temporary effect. The Baldwin Government pursues its own policy until popular indignation becomes too great. It then gives way, in appearance, to popular opinion, and pursues an insincere and double policy, until it can turn turn and say, "There, I told you so. Your policy was wrong."

<sup>1</sup> Supposing that a shop-steward calls a strike, after a vain appeal for support from headquarters, whether that strike succeeds or fails, the shop-steward is liable to be dismissed from the union, "for bringing the union into contempt." Readers will have noticed that the majority of strikes in recent times have been unofficial, in the sense that they have received no support from headquarters; also the high percentage of strikes against the dismissal of special workers, in nearly every case militants who have received no official support. These disciplinary measures would be necessary where headquarters took a progressive policy. But as things are, the reactionary policy of the leaders tries to stifle the activity of all courageous militants.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

The Labour situation is similar. The leaders are united in opposition to the rank and file. Only a persistent mobilisation of rank and file opinion can sway the party leadership. And even so, there will be no permanent effect on the policy of the Labour Party until strong leaders arise who are prepared to sink their differences and unite with all the parties of the Left.

The weakness of the Labour Party has throughout been the desire to make itself respectable. It has been blackmailed by the intensive anti-Red propaganda of the capitalist Press into a position where every socialist measure in its programme is carefully hidden. It has been so anxious to avoid the stigma of Bolshevism that it has made itself indistinguishable from the Tory Party, except that it is capitalist through weakness, whereas the Tory Party is capitalist through strength.

The only future for the Labour Party lies in identification with liberal and true socialist. Morrison, Citrine and Atlee are fighting against this conviction. But the evidence is coming constantly before them, in resolutions passed by trade unions, in the active help that the communists give to their candidates in municipal and parliamentary elections,<sup>1</sup> and in the dynamic spirit of the Left Book Club, which is training an ever-growing body of political thinkers and workers.

From the way in which this chapter has developed the impression might be obtained that I considered the activity of the social sense to find its only, or its completest, expression in politics. I don't mean this. It is

<sup>1</sup> This help is usually officially refused and unofficially accepted with gratitude. What is feared is the reaction of the voting public. "It's the communists do all the work round here, not the Labour Party." The reason for this is that the communists want every member to be active and militant throughout, while the Labour Party prefer a nucleus of workers who'll help at elections and revert to coma between times.



rather the starvation of the social sense that leads to political activity. We have become convinced that the division between individual and social good must continue under the present economic system: and our interest in politics derives from the desire to change that system. Under a system where the division did not exist, even those functions which are now considered to be pursued only for personal profit would be an important form of social activity. The two motives would combine and reinforce one another, instead of being in constant conflict.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Before the War there were many, and even now there are a certain number of, persons who honestly believe that they can remedy our present ills by working within the system. I refer to certain social workers, priests, doctors, etc., the nature of whose work is humanitarian. In most cases they willingly sacrifice personal interest to their desire to help humanity. Their lives are thus limited to the social satisfactions, just as those of the rich are to personal satisfactions. They do not, or cannot, carry the analysis of the evils against which they are fighting, beyond their particular front: so that while in individual cases they do much that is valuable, their selfishness and good work within the system provides exploiters with reasons why the system should continue. The charity basis of the hospital system, by its relative goodness, is a good example of this obscuring of issues.

## CHAPTER XI

### *The Test of Practice*

IN THE previous chapter I tried to shew that existence under capitalism had separated the social sense from self-interest: that this separation was in itself an unhealthy thing and that no one could live a full and responsible life, as individual and as citizen, while acquiescing in this system.

It is now my intention to treat practical affairs. Supposing that capitalism is incapable of providing a full, social life, can it succeed by moral perversion in providing an existence for the mass of people which is secure from financial anxiety and fear of war? I am putting the test at its lowest. I am not asking whether capitalism is capable of offering every man an equal opportunity of development: whether it can raise the cultural and physical level of the race: whether it can conquer superstition in matters of religion, sex, and human relations. Capitalism has ceased to be a progressive force. Its champions no longer look with excitement to a roseate future: they turn their eyes wistfully back to the times when things were going forward. They are fighting to keep things as they are. "A plague on both your houses," they repeat after one another: and over and over again the phrase is quoted in the Sayings of the Week, ascribed to a new wit. Many of them are sincerely afraid of fascism, the policy towards which the National Government is drifting

## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

while abominating Mosley. Yet their highest hope is to keep things as they are: to freeze the river of Time.

On *a priori* grounds it is obvious that this is impossible. Time cannot stand still. Everything changes with a greater speed, or lesser: that man perishes, or that civilisation dies, which sets its face against progression. We come from the past and we journey to the future. The man who journeys into the future with his eyes on the past is worse than blind. A blind man is bereft of one sense, and he uses all his others to compensate him. The man with his eyes on the past might as well have no senses at all.

But is there a possibility that capitalism will survive in its present form? What is the evidence of the history of the last quarter of a century? It is not enough to point out that socialism is able to organise man's work more efficiently, and increase the power of every individual to reach the satisfaction of his desires. The change from capitalism to socialism, whether it is accomplished by violence or peaceful methods, must be revolutionary. Revolutions are planned by men with vision: but they are accomplished by men with empty bellies.

The period from 1906 to the outbreak of the War was one which shewed, as we have said above, a tremendous increase in social services. This was not due to the pangs of conscience, nor to a sudden capitalist benevolence. It was the result of the renewed militancy of the working class. In the first half of the previous century the condition of the working class had been so frightful that spontaneous upheavals had taken place. But after the Repeal of the Corn Laws and the passage of the Ten Hours Bill, British capitalism went ahead,

## THE CHANGING SCENE

and during the third quarter of the century the conditions of the working class in general were slightly bettered, and an intermediate class of skilled workers was created on a higher level than the mass. The wages of these skilled workers steadily rose during this period. And in face of opposition, their trade union organisations gradually won recognition for their right of collective bargaining and the protection of their members.

During the last quarter of the century, money wages rose at a much slower rate, and in some cases remained at the same level. But this was compensated by a steady decline in prices, which was equivalent to a rise in real wages, up till 1900.

"This was the period," writes John Strachey, in *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, "this was the period of general working-class acquiescence in capitalism. For the new and alone articulate sub-class, consisting of skilled workers in the basic industries—the engineers, the cotton operatives, the hewers in the coal pits, and the skilled iron and steel operatives—had little or nothing in common either with their own fathers, who had laboured and suffered in the first half of the century, or with the unskilled workers of their own day, who were labouring and suffering still. If the whole British working class had shared in the outrageous conditions of life and labour endured by the unskilled, their helpless resignation would have been inconceivable. If the highly skilled, organised workers in the great basic industries had been subjected to conditions even similar to those endured by the rest of the working-class, a formidable anti-capitalist working-class movement would certainly have arisen."

## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

It is the old method of *Divide and Rule*, which we have seen throughout this book has proved the bulwark of capitalism.

In 1900, however, prices began to rise again, while wages lagged behind. The conditions of the whole working class, skilled and unskilled, began to grow worse. And in consequence the Labour Movement grew with astonishing rapidity. During the Liberal-Labour Coalition, 1906 onwards, considerable concessions were gained from the capitalists. Health insurance, old age pensions and in a very limited form unemployment insurance were introduced during this period. Immediately after the War, these social services were extended: housing subsidies were instituted, the number of Trade Boards, by which minimum wage rates are fixed in certain industries, were greatly increased. And a wider system of unemployment insurance was enacted. Later, old age pensions were increased, widows' pensions created and public relief extended.

"But how was the economically hard-pressed British governing class able to afford to prop up the workers' standard of life by extended social services?" Strachey asks, in the work quoted above. "The answer is that the funds out of which the British social services are paid come, in the ultimate economic analysis, not from competitively derived profit, every penny of which is now urgently needed to maintain an adequate rate of profit on the British capitalists' vast total capital, but from monopolistic semi-feudal tribute derived from Britain's vast dependent Empire. The exploitation of a whole sub-continent such as India, in which wealth is to a large extent taken from the workers and peasants by direct, monopolistic methods, without the check of

effective competition, modifies the working of the laws of capitalism *in the favour of the British capitalists—so long as they possess their Empire.*”

Strachey then proceeds to draw attention to certain similarities between the economic system of Imperial Britain and the economy of the late Roman Empire. “If the British capitalists had no other way of extracting their wealth than by the normal workings of competitive capitalism, they would not have a penny to spare for concessions to the British workers. But the dependent Empire, by allowing them to sell a substantial proportion of their exports well above the price of production, since they sell in semi-monopoly conditions, provides them with a fund which can be, and is, used to prevent the British workers from becoming desperate. *Panis et circenses* are distributed in the old Roman way, although in money instead of in kind.”

“However,” he continues, “the economy of modern Britain resembles only very partially that of ancient Rome. Capitalism *did* come to birth in Britain. Over 80 per cent. of the British proletariat are still wage workers, not dole drawers. Above all, the British Empire does not reign unchallenged over the whole civilised world as Rome once did. On the contrary, her power and her wealth are . . . acutely challenged everywhere both by other powerful and ravenous capitalist empires and by increasing intransigence on the part of the colonial peoples. Hence the ability of the British capitalists to keep their workers quiet with timely doses of bread and circuses is relatively limited.”

Strachey goes on to shew that the old principle is still at work: Workers of a low efficiency are kept from starvation level by the dole: workers of a high efficiency

are promoted to a level of comparative prosperity, so that their immediate interests are at variance with unskilled or casual labour. The skilled class, the potential leaders of a revolutionary movement, are promoted so that they should not feel the pinch so hard. He notes, however, that this privileged section of workers is no longer those engaged in the great staple industries of coal, cotton, shipbuilding and general engineering. Some of these, notably the skilled miners, have almost sunk to the conditions of unskilled labourers. In their place has arisen a privileged class engaged chiefly in light, secondary industries, situated in the South of England and mostly around London.

This change during the last twenty-five years is of importance in many different directions. The population drift is to the South. And the results of that drift are shewn in the enormous increase of people living in and around London. Immediately before the War, British domestic architecture was at a low ebb. The suburban villas of that period are ugly, dismal and pretentious. But the materials of which they were built, the brick and timber, were of comparatively good quality. To-day, where the motto is "Cheapness is all," the styles have, if anything, grown worse. (I am not talking about the few good domestic buildings erected to-day: but of the generality, the formulæ employed by speculative builders who buy up fields and develop them as estates.) Every style is rampant, from the olde Tudor to the Moderne. But all are fake. The bricks of which they are built are not properly baked: the timber used is not properly seasoned. A few years, often only a few months, and the walls sweat and discolour. Damp sets in in the spare bedroom. The mantelpiece cracks.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

The window-frames warp and let in water between wall and frame. The windows swell and won't open and close unless they are planed down. Then they contract and the wind blows between the cracks and when it rains, bubbles of water froth up and collect on the sill. The ceilings crack. Sometimes they fall on people when they are lying in bed, at others when they are sitting down or standing up.

Noises are audible through walls and floors. The creaking of springs in the parental bedroom lulls restless children to sleep. In the dining-room the flushing of the closet sounds like a deluge down the hallway stairs: and the cistern filling seems to the visitor in the parlour like the cooing of turtle-doves.

London is belted with these select little estates where for anything from 11s.6d. to 27s.6d. a week you can purchase in twenty years a bijou bungalow which has a life of fifteen. Whatever the distortions due to private house-owning and tenancy, it guaranteed, at least, that the landlord wanted his property to be as solidly built as possible. But these propositions which offer hire-purchase terms instead of rent are financed as catch-pennies. Induce the young married couple with the sight of a new and showy villa to undertake its purchase and repairs for the next twenty years. It doesn't matter what the quality of the material is: because when anything goes wrong, the hire-purchaser, who is really the tenant, has to replace it.

The South of England, the Home Counties, especially, are being ravished of their neat prettiness. Kipling's England was a garden. Ours is becoming a garden-suburb. His was full of stately ways: ours has by-pass roads, down which at week-ends those who live in



## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

houses which deface half England rush in their cars to deface the other half with the refuse of their picnic baskets.

Town-planning committees have been set up to prevent the erection of unsuitable buildings. There is nearly always a speculative builder, or his uncle or a dear friend, on these committees. Their position is reversed. They were established to put down desecration. They flourish by legitimising it.

Inland and round the coast of England this building goes forward apace. Every year half a dozen hideous bungalows are erected, their windows trained like goggle eyes across the bay. The cost of these bungalows is never more than five hundred pounds and often less than three hundred and fifty. The owners, who are themselves speculators living miles away from their property, charge for these atrocities seven guineas a week during the month of August, six for September and July, five for June, four for May, and thirty shillings or a pound a week if they can let them during the rest of the year. They rake in anything from 20 to 30 per cent. interest on their capital per annum.

There has been no protest against the buildings, which in many cases the builders have been loth to build from sheer contempt at their shoddiness. (They are built of cheap, light bricks and covered with stucco, an economy which saves fifty pounds in five hundred, as compared with a solid house of the same dimensions built in local stone.) Yet a house built at the head of the point, planned and supervised by an architect for his own residence, a work of remarkable skill and patience, not defacing the landscape but adorning it: this house will be selected as a sacrilege to nature.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

As with the erection of new buildings, so with the destruction of old. A building needs only to distinguish itself by fine proportions for it to be marked down for demolition and the site developed for modern needs. Commercial expediency in almost every case is allowed to override all other considerations. Admittedly St. Paul's Cathedral has not yet been pulled down to make a site for a new Woolworth's: but I am almost afraid to allow that sentence to stand lest it give some pioneer of commerce the idea which will land him in the House of Lords. New conditions demand new buildings. As I look out of my window, I see a mile of grimed and ugly warehouses and wharfs. They are badly planned and their equipment is out of date. It would be a very good idea to pull them down and replace them by more efficient modern buildings. But those aren't the buildings that will come down. The remnant of a Georgian terrace just a little higher up stream will come down first. They are magnificently built. Their view down the river is a joy for those who live in them. But they are useless. That is a valuable site, which will have to be developed. There is nearly a hundred yards of river frontage lying idle!

I have developed my complaint about architecture at some length. I might just as well have dealt with the decline in the quality of furniture, as with houses. The existence of a large semi-working class, infiltrated with bourgeois ambitions has gone hand in hand with the invention of substitute materials, fake furniture and ornaments, jerry-built houses and Lyons luxury.

The supply of cheap, imitation goods has made the distinction of the rich and the moderately poor less

acute to-day than it ever was. To anyone who has an eye for the cut of clothes or the quality of fabric, the distinction remains as great. But the superficial impression is one of similarity, at least when the worker is wearing his Sunday clothes.

This must be borne in mind when we examine the statement italicised above. "The exploitation of a whole sub-continent such as India, in which wealth is to a large extent taken from the workers and peasants by direct, monopolistic methods, without the check of effective competition, modifies the working of the laws of capitalism *in the favour of the British capitalists—so long as they possess their Empire.*"

Strachey places the full onus on the British *capitalist*: and it is true, of course, that the capitalist gets the (British) lion's share. Yet he admits that the position of the British working-class is better under imperialist capitalism than if we had no empire. Therefore, to a certain extent, the British working-class is deriving a dividend from empire: and its *immediate* interest is to continue to exploit the subject-nations in order to maintain its own standard of living.

This is a problem that socialists<sup>1</sup> tend to evade, but which has got to be tackled. In the case of Spain and France, the United Front programmes have neglected the colonies. Spain is already suffering from this oversight. It has yet to be seen whether France will encounter difficulties from her colonies. True socialism cannot be built in a country which is depending for her economic welfare on the exploitation of colonies. It is quite conceivable that if our subject-empire was freed from exploitation that the general standard of

<sup>1</sup> The short-term programme of the Labour Party ignores all colonial problems.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

living in this country, even under socialism, would sink very considerably. Indeed, it is difficult to see how this could be avoided during a period of transition and reorganisation.

The three points of danger for capitalist Britain are indicated by Strachey. Firstly, the Empire is discontented. The condition of the coloured races is not only scandalous by European standards: it is scandalous by African and Indian standards. An entirely different social organisation exists for India and the protectorates. Freedom of the Press is not even simulated, as in this country. The only parallels to be found in Europe are those which we publicly deride and abominate in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Literature which is published freely in this country is denied entry to India. The policy of 'divide and rule,' which we regarded at one time as the solution of the Indian problem, is losing its efficiency. The conscience-saving myth of the Hindu and the Moslem only restrained from flying at one another's throats by the power of the British Raj is becoming even more discredited than the Story of the Fall, despite our efforts to foster racial and religious dissension among the Indians. Force is becoming the chief, as it was always the ultimate, method of suppressing political movements unfavourable to the British exploiters. This method is, of course, not new to British Imperialism. It is the extension of the policy used under the Liberal Government of 1910, as the following extracts from the Diaries of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt will shew:

"April 25th, 1910: A young Indian, Savarkar, has been arrested here (in England) on a charge of having written letters inciting to murder in India; this on the demand of the Indian

## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

Government. The plan, Kháparde tells me, is to get him to India on any plea, true or false, and when once there to deal with him under the Deportation Law. A queer state of things for us to have come to in England, and a good example of how Imperial despotism abroad is ruining National liberty at home. According to Brailsford, young Savarkar is a most excellent and admirable youth, as all the young political murderers seem to be, both in India and Egypt.

"July 16th: Savarkar, the Indian who was recently extradited and sent to India from London, has managed to squeeze through his cabin window at Marseilles and swim ashore, but was arrested by a French gendarme and returned to the ship. He had had friends ready with a motor to get him away. Kháparde tells me that Savarkar is the author of *The Indian Revolution of 1857*, and that that is the real reason why they want to get him back to India and punish him.

"October 8th: . . . The Savarkar affair with France has been referred to arbitration, thus confirming what Goumah told me three weeks ago.

"February 25th, 1911: . . . Savarkar's case has been given in favour of the English demand, which refuses to send him back to France. I am sorry for the poor young man, whose real crime in Anglo-Indian official eyes has been his authorship of the *History of the Indian Revolution*."

The conclusion of the affair is given in a note on an entry for the 3rd of March, 1910: "He (Hyndman) gave me to read the newly published *History of the Revolution of 1857* (a highly seditious and interesting volume, written by Savarkar, whom afterwards they imprisoned for life)." One of the more vivid links between the pre-War and the post-depression period is that Savarkar, if he hasn't been killed by the barbarity of Indian prison life, is still serving his prison sentence for the crime of writing a history book.

Criticism must begin at home. If we are to condemn, as I think we should, the Italian campaign in Abyssinia ("nothing was left to chance, and the Abyssinian War

may well serve as a model of what a colonial campaign should be."—Sir Charles Petrie, *English Review*, February 1937), we must also condemn the British campaign, waged contemporaneously on the North-West Frontier, one of those campaigns for which Lord Londonderry boasted that he had preserved the use of the bombing aeroplane.

Similarly, if we condemn the atrocities of Italian and German fascism, the persecution of races and political enemies, the burning of books and the trial of their authors, ("We like the German people and we admire their ruler."—Derek Walker Smith, *English Review*, February, 1937), we must condemn those same things, practised in the name of Empire, in India and Africa.<sup>1</sup>

But though a section of the British public may repudiate the consequences of imperialism,<sup>2</sup> the movement for freedom must, in the first place, come from the subject-peoples themselves. In India, where the discontent against British rule is more strongly organised than elsewhere, hundreds of political prisoners are confined in our jails. But despite, and perhaps to an extent because of, our repressive measures, the Indian Nationalist Movement is steadily growing. Social and religious differences are being sunk in the face of the common white enemy.

British capitalism, therefore, is vulnerable from within

<sup>1</sup> "The reprisals (to the bombing of Graziani) were carried out with a savagery almost beyond description," wrote the *Times* correspondent. Mussolini's answer was a Tu quoque with regard to India; accusations turned aside by the Imperialist Press as "grossly unjustified and exaggerated."

<sup>2</sup> *Savage Civilisation*, an anthropological study of the inhabitants of the New Hebrides, gives an account of the effect of Spanish, French and English imperialism on the islanders. Its author, T. H. Harrison, writes from the point of view of a scientist and historian, concerned only with what happened. His indictment is the more damning for this reason.

the empire. The loyalty of its subject-peoples is only extorted by the exercise and threat of force.

At the same time, the fascist nations look with envious eyes upon our colonies. Our complacent assurance that raw materials from the colonies are open for all nations does not convince or satisfy these powers. In time of war they know that they will be cut off. And in time of peace they know that these colonies serve as semi-monopolised markets for imperial goods. In the same way our Protectorates, legally sanctioned by the League of Nations, plainly give the advantages of colonisation without the stigma. The British Empire can hide its true intentions under the cloak of impartial administration of justice.

The internal economy of both Italy and Germany is so unstable that imperialistic adventures are demanded to distract the people from the contemplation of their own misery towards the equivocal glory of colonial conquest.

Certain fascist sympathisers in this country maintain that Germany and Italy have a case for colonial satisfaction, because they are Have-Not nations. But they are in fact only Have-Not nations because they are fascist. Germany lost her colonies as a result of the War. But, then, Russia lost Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland as a result of the War. And Russia is no Have-Not nation. But, says Hitler, Russia has a huge internal empire. If we only had the Ukraine! The answer is that the Scandinavian countries have no huge internal empires, yet they are the most satisfied of all the European powers. (See Palme Dutt, *World Politics*, 1918-36, on the Have and Have-Not Powers.)

Both Italy and Germany claim that their population

is too great for the land they hold. Yet immigration is stoppered down and every inducement is given to women to propagate as rapidly as they can. Over-population is not the reason for fascist aggression, but its effect. The rising birth-rate is now being used as an argument: and will be used later as an army: in order to take areas for exploitation.

Hitler has already followed out the policy outlined with startling frankness in *Mein Kampf*. His war policy of isolating the sphere of conflict, so that the strong power may crush the weak without interference from other powers of equal strength, has already been acquiesced in by the British Government in the pact for non-intervention.

There is a danger that, unless strong pressure is brought to bear upon the Government, some form of Western Pact may be engineered which will leave Germany free to attack the Balkan States, with the seizure of Ukraine as the eventual goal.

A cynical diplomacy might advocate German expansion in Eastern Europe, as an outlet for her colonial ambitions. But Hitler has stated his plans even further ahead. The first step is to make a friend of England while the preliminary conquests are made. The second is to come out in the open as the enemy of England and launch an attack against the Empire.

The Tory Government is placed in an awkward position. On the one hand, it desires to hold the Empire. In order to do this it must have freedom of communication through the Straits of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. Otherwise, all traffic to India and the Far East must travel via the Cape of Good Hope. Yet, on the other hand, the other nations of



## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

Europe, which are pacific in intentions, are either progressive as France, socialist as Scandinavia, or communist as the U.S.S.R. Party interests and imperial interests conflict.

This Government has tried to strike a compromise. It has refused to work in concert with France and the U.S.S.R., proclaiming its impartiality: and at the same time it has made possible the fascist intervention in Spain, which works against the imperialist interests of Great Britain.

Gibraltar, that rock on which the British Empire was supposed to be built, is no longer of strategic importance. Powerful guns have been installed in Ceuta and on the Spanish coast capable of controlling all shipping passing through the Straits. If Franco is successful with his mercenaries, the straits will be commanded by German interests. Franco, or some equivalent puppet, will nominally dictate to the Spanish people: and Germany with her economic hold on the country's resources will dictate to Franco. Further East, the Italians will have their outposts in the Balearics. The Canaries will provide a suitable base for commanding the route round the Cape. Meanwhile the Suez route is cut at the other end, from Eritrea. Egypt and the Sudan can be threatened from the South and from the West.

In the last two years the British Empire has become very much more vulnerable. And it is noticeable that the imperial policy has become flaccid in comparison with the policy pursued before the last war. Recent events in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, Danzig and the Rhineland are fresh in the reader's mind. Compare with them the major crisis of the Agadir incident in 1911.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

On the afternoon of July 1st, the German Ambassador in London, Count Metternich, informed Sir Arthur Nicolson that "Owing to the disturbed condition of affairs in Morocco, and in response to the appeals which they had received 'from certain German merchants,' the German Government had decided to send a warship, the *Panther*, to Agadir. Nicolson expressed some surprise . . . and observed that Agadir was not one of the Moorish ports which were open to trade, and that he was unaware that there were any German residents or merchants in the vicinity. Count Metternich replied, with obvious embarrassment, that his instructions were simply to announce the fact and not to enter into any discussion on the subject. Nicolson suggested that the despatch of a warship to a Moorish port was a violation of the Act of Algeciras. 'That,' answered Count Metternich, 'has already lost its validity.' . . . On the same day, July 1st, 1911, the *Panther* appeared in front of Agadir."<sup>1</sup>

"The Agadir incident provides an admirable illustration of the ineptitude of German diplomatic methods. On paper the German Government possessed an excellent case. It was perfectly true that the Act of Algeciras had to all intents and purposes become a dead letter. The French had gradually extended their influence by methods not contemplated by that instrument, and in April, 1911, M. Cruppi had announced the impending despatch of a French column to Fez. The German Government had at once intimated to Paris that such action would be considered an infringement of the Act of Algeciras and would entitle them

<sup>1</sup> *Lord Carnock*, p. 341, by Harold Nicolson, from whose excellent biography the extracts following are also taken.

to resume their liberty of action. They could thus argue with perfect justification that they were fully entitled to send a warship to Agadir.

"Such arguments, however, failed to carry conviction. In the first place, by the Franco-German Convention of February 9th, 1909, Germany had already agreed to 'disinterest herself politically' in Morocco in return for economic concessions. The details of these concessions had led to protracted negotiations between M. Jules Cambon, French Ambassador in Berlin, and Herr von Kiderlen Waechter. Only a week before despatching the *Panther* to Morocco, the German minister had been engaged at Kissingen in a very friendly negotiation with M. Cambon. It is not surprising, therefore, that no well-informed person either in Paris or London believed for one moment in the explanations and assurances of the German Government. Nor did Herr von Kiderlen Waechter expect his statements to be taken at their face value. He at once informed M. Cambon that he would withdraw the *Panther* and give France a free hand in Morocco in return for substantial compensations elsewhere. When asked to disclose the nature of these compensations, he indicated that what Germany wanted was practically the whole of the French Congo.

"Foreign opinion was therefore correct in assuming from the outset that the '*Panther's* spring' was in no way connected with German rights or interests in Morocco but represented a desire on the part of the German Government to obtain something in hand for the purpose of future bargaining. Herr von Kiderlen's action was, in fact, a reversal to the old 'Geiselttheorie' of Holstein—the theory that it is a clever diplomatic

## THE CHANGING SCENE

move to seize some pledge or 'Faustpfand' and to refuse to surrender it except in return for payment. Such a manœuvre is seldom successful. In the first place it is not often remunerative to ask for one thing when you want another. And in the second place this duplication of intention is apt to arouse distrust and opposition. Within a few weeks of Herr von Kiderlen's gesture it was admitted, even in Berlin, that he had committed a blunder. 'German public opinion,' wrote Goschen, 'is beginning to realise that Agadir was a mistake, and that it has put the Morocco question on a sabre-rattling footing from which it is difficult to retreat and dangerous to advance.'"

Herr von Kiderlen expected that France would be isolated. He thought that Russia would not be prepared to support France in a colonial question: and he assumed, perhaps from the enthusiastic reception given to the Emperor, on his last visit to England, that he had nothing to fear from this country.

He was mistaken. On July 4th, Sir Edward Grey told Count Metternich that our attitude could not be disinterested and that "we could not recognise any new agreements which might be come to without us." This hint was ignored, and no answer was given until July 24th. Meanwhile, negotiations were opened with France on the 15th: and on the 21st Mr. Lloyd George, at a Mansion House luncheon to the City Bankers, said: "If a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievements; by allowing Britain to be treated, where her interests were vitally affected, as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of

## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

Nations: then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be intolerable for a Great Country like ours to endure."

Not even the bombast softened the blow of Lloyd George's words. It was plain that England was going to stand by France and the obligations of the Triple Entente. War was very close.

On July 19th Herr von Kiderlen had warned M. Jules Cambon that if she did not obtain what she desired in the Congo, Germany would go "to the bitter end." On the 25th "Count Metternich made to Sir Edward Grey a communication of so minatory a character that the latter felt obliged to warn the Admiralty that 'the fleet might be attacked at any moment.'" In August M. Cambon reported to his Government that "it would be mere levity not to foresee a conflict." At the same time von Kiderlen was saying that "the attitude of France made war almost inevitable."

On September 17th Sir Edward Grey wrote to Sir Arthur Nicolson as follows:

"The negotiations with Germany may at any moment take an unfavourable turn, and, if they do so, the Germans may act very quickly, even suddenly. The Admiralty should remain prepared for this. It is what I have always said to McKenna. Our fleets should, therefore, always be in such a condition and position that they would welcome a German attack, if the Germans should decide on that suddenly. We should, of course, give the Admiralty news immediately of any unfavourable turn in the Franco-German negotiations, but German action might follow so soon after this that there would not be time to get our ships together if they were not in positions whence this could be done quickly. I should like to be sure that the Admiralty are keeping this in mind. I am puzzled by the German optimistic reports of the prospect of the Franco-German negotiations.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

They may be, and probably are, intended to prepare a way for a climb down; but they may be intended to mislead and lull suspicions before a rapid coup."

Lord Carnock's biographer adds: "Our preparations were in fact far more advanced than was realised by British public opinion. It was not known, for instance, that from September 8th to September 22nd of 1911 we were in constant expectation of hostilities, and that the tunnels and bridges on the South Eastern Railway were being patrolled day and night. It was not till the morning of September 22nd, on the receipt of news from Berlin that Herr von Kiderlen was weakening, that Nicolson was able to give the word that a state of 'war preparedness' might be relaxed."

After that date the situation was eased. Von Kiderlen reduced his demands to such as France might accept. On October 11th he recognised France's position in Morocco: and on the 3rd of the following month a Convention was signed, ceding certain Congo territory to Germany. The Agadir crisis was over.

It came out later that at the time of Lloyd George's speech, secret negotiations were in progress between M. Caillaux, President of the French Council of Ministers, and the German Government through the medium of international finance. These negotiations were of a character that led the Germans to expect very much more than they subsequently received. They were conducted without the knowledge of the British Foreign Office, and more remarkable still without the knowledge of the French Foreign Office.

"The issue, however," writes Harold Nicolson, "had been far wider and deeper than a mere controversy as to whether France should obtain Morocco or Germany

## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

the Congo, or whether Joseph Caillaux was, or was not, a crook. From the outset Nicolson had realised that here again arose the problem of whether or no Germany was to dominate the Continent. On July 24th, 1911, he had written as follows to Sir Edward Goschen:

"There is no use in disguising the fact that the situation is a serious and delicate one, and it is not simply a question as to whether the French will give such and such concessions to Germany or whether the establishment of Germany in such and such ports in Morocco is or is not a vital question for us. The whole question is whether we intend to maintain the Triple Entente, and I think that it is upon this broad ground that the situation should be viewed. If the French really saw any weakening on our part in this respect, they would, in all probability, make terms with Germany, quite irrespective of us, and they would never forgive us for having failed them at a critical moment. The result would be that we should then have a triumphant Germany and an unfriendly France and Russia and our policy since 1904 of maintaining the equilibrium, and consequently the peace of Europe, would be completely wrecked. Moreover, the change in our relations both with France and Russia would materially alter our naval situation in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, and would also render our position in Central Asia both unstable and insecure. I think that our Government fully realise this, so that I am not uneasy that such a catastrophe will occur. At the same time we are face to face with a very grave problem which will require very careful and serious handling."

Harold Nicolson sub-titles the biography of his father, as *A Study in the Old Diplomacy*. The first thing that is noticeable about the Agadir Crisis in comparison to new crises is its mildness. The violence of modern public diplomacy, Hitler's week-end coups, the snook\*cocked by Herr Greiser in the League of Nations Assembly, the fulminations and abuse broadcast from the U.S.S.R., Germany and Spain, General Queipo de Llano's drunken harangues, the pneumatic drill of

## THE CHANGING SCENE

Hitler's oratory and the booming artillery of Mussolini's voice: these are things utterly at variance with pre-War methods.

Secondly, whereas Imperial policy was firm and dependable before the War, to-day our Government takes no certain position. Laval, we were told, let Eden down on a common policy towards the Italo-Abyssinian question. Now Baldwin has let Blum down on the question of Spain. The issues were clear in terms of international law. The Government should have been allowed to buy arms: the Insurgents should not. If this had taken place, the rebellion would have been suppressed at its outset. Now it is in its eighth bloody month: and even by the time this book appears, the issue may not have been decided.

In place of a constructive foreign policy the Government places its trust in an armament programme for no defined end: a policy which Sir Edward Grey himself announced to be utterly futile.

It seems that it is on this question of war that capitalism will break itself. Germany and Italy to gain markets, Great Britain and France to keep them, are preparing armed forces that nothing but a miracle will keep from war within a decade. Britain is already making her preparations. Everybody is rallying to do his bit. The following extract from the *Daily Telegraph* shews the remarkable patriotism of British Employers:

### "FIRMS' PLAN TO ENCOURAGE RECRUITING

"5 P.C. OF WORKERS FOR TERRITORIALS

"EVERY EMPLOYER URGED TO HELP

"Representatives of many important industrial firms decided last night to encourage their employees to join the Territorials.



## THE TEST OF PRACTICE

At a meeting held at the headquarters of the London Regiment in Sun Street, E.C., a resolution was passed which recommended:

“That every employer shall personally interest himself in securing that 5 per cent. of his male employees enlist in the Territorial Army, and, particularly, that employees with training in any branch of engineering shall enlist in an appropriate unit.”—*Daily Telegraph*, February 19th, 1937.

In the next column to this is printed the news of a scheme for the supply of all available scrap iron and steel at economic prices, agreed on by the British Iron and Steel Federation and the National Federation of Scrap Merchants. Owing to the increase of armament all over the world scrap metal has risen in price and foreign bidders have offered prices which many steel-works were not prepared to pay. The official statement issued by the British Iron and Steel Federation, announcing the agreement, said that it had been arrived at “in view of the urgent need for the conservation of raw materials to meet the general demand for steel, including Government requirements.”

But this agreement is not unanimously approved by the scrap merchants. The official of a certain large private firm stated:

“There is no necessity whatever to put an embargo on the export of steel scrap. It is repugnant to English business men that some of their compatriots should be placed in the position of being able to control the export and sale of scrap and to dictate to other firms where we should or should not sell our scrap.”

But it is not repugnant to English business men that others of their compatriots in their employ should be placed in the Territorials, ready to sacrifice their lives so that others should not sacrifice their profits.

## CHAPTER XII

### *The Condition of Labour*

"I have often heard it said that the unemployed are much better off to-day from the standpoint of benefit and relief scales than they were before the Great War. This is quite true; before the War only a small section of the workers were covered by unemployment insurance, and the benefits were only 7s. a week with no dependants' allowance. But the point that has to be borne in mind in this respect is that since the War unemployment has been a constant problem in the lives of millions of our class, whereas previously the periods of unemployment were much shorter and the numbers affected were smaller."

—WAL HANNINGTON, *Unemployed Struggles*, 1919-36, p. 321.

NO ACCURATE figures for unemployment existed before the War. National statistics were not compiled until 1921. This in itself is an indication of the change in attitude towards the problem of unemployment. Before the War, it was possible to advance the theory that those out of employment were either unemployables or the small reserve necessary for the recruiting of labour, seasonal or rush workers. The compilation of national statistics was the tacit admission that the supply of labour had outgrown the demand for it: or, put in another way, that national industry was incapable of absorbing a greater percentage of workers.

But though no national statistics exist for the purposes of contrast the following trade unions' percentages of insured workers unemployed provide at least some basis for comparison:

## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

Pre-War years:	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	
	4'7	3'0	3'2	2'1	3'3	
War years:	1915	1916	1917	1918		
	1'1	0'4	0'7	0'8		
Demobilisation:	1919	1920				
	2'4	2'4				
Post-War:	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
	14'8	15'2	11'3	8'1	10'5	12'2

That is to say, the level of unemployment among insured workers seldom rose above 5 per cent. before the War. After the War, the level seldom sank below 10 per cent.: and in times of depression it rises close to 20 per cent. The maximum figures for unemployment, in percentage of insured population, is nearly four times greater post-War than pre-War: while the minimum is slightly over four times greater.

It is plain from this that the problem of unemployment is quite different to-day from the pre-War problem. In those days unemployment insurance was a humanitarian scheme to provide the worker with funds to tide him from one period of employment to another. In these days it is a measure of necessity, devised to keep unemployed workers in a state of semi-contentment the bare minimum which they will accept without becoming revolutionary.

Wal Hannington, in his *Unemployed Struggles, 1919-36*, has given a full account of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, a movement started shortly after the end of the War in order to organise the unemployed in the defence of their rights, and prevent the trade unions from being demoralised by the existence of a disintegrated band of unemployed workers, ready to turn blackleg when the occasion arose. I recommend

## THE CHANGING SCENE

everybody to read this book, because it gives in detail the history of the struggle which these men have conducted to preserve their conditions and, wherever possible, to ameliorate them. The general public knows only of the Hunger Marches, organised by the N.U.W.M. It knows little of the skilled manoeuvres that have been necessary in order to carry out those marches: the discouragement and force used, not only by the Tory Party, but also in recent years by the reactionary leaders of the trade unions and the official Labour Party, to prevent marches and demonstrations taking place. It knows nothing of the broken heads and baton charges, the arrests, the imprisonments and the trumping up and propagation of the wildest lies and rumours with regard to this movement.

The N.U.W.M. has stood, and in the last ten years it has stood alone, as the champion of the unemployed. The conditions of the unemployed to-day are demoralising: but they would be unimaginably worse if it had not been for this courageous organisation. I give one of his examples of the activities of the N.U.W.M. and the treatment which they received at the hands of the police.

"On September 13th, 10,000 Birkenhead unemployed demonstrated to the Public Assistance Committee (against the recently introduced Means Test) with the following simple demands:

" 'Relief to all able-bodied unemployed and an increase of 3s. per week; immediate supply of boots and clothes and one hundredweight of coal during the winter; and the starting of work schemes at trade union rates.'

"A deputation was received, and the Council agreed to send a telegram to the Government calling for the abolition of the Means Test. They also agreed to institute work schemes at trade union rates to the total value of £180,000. The deputation returned to the demonstrators, announced their success, and the unemployed began to march away quietly.

## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

"The police, hundreds of whom had been drafted in from Liverpool, then interfered with the crowd, a conflict took place and several arrests were made. Two days later the unemployed again demonstrated outside the P.A.C. offices to secure improvements in their relief scales, and later outside the house of the chairman of the P.A.C. to express their dissatisfaction, and to demand the release of the workers who had been arrested at the previous demonstration. The demonstration was quite peaceful and orderly, but suddenly large numbers of police were ordered to draw their batons and they began to club to the ground demonstrators and pedestrians, including men, women and children, the aged and the infirm.

"This roused the feeling of the whole of Birkenhead, and that night a tremendous demonstration assembled at the park gates as a protest against the police action. After short speeches they formed up and marched round the town, returning to the park gates, and when the demonstrators were just about to disperse to their homes the police, without any apparent reason, made a baton charge. Unemployed and employed workers stood their ground, and one policeman was thrown through a plate-glass window. The crowd took up the offensive and the police were ultimately compelled to run; but they rallied again, and a pitched battle ensued. Workers tore up railings to defend themselves, and the fighting went on until past eleven at night, thirty-seven policemen being carried to hospital.

"Most of the wounded amongst the workers were taken into the homes of their class to have their wounds dressed, in order that they should not be marked for police arrest. Next day a further huge force of police were drafted into the town, coming from as far away as Birmingham, until the town looked like an armed camp. The police marched through the streets in military fashion in order to intimidate the workers. Another great demonstration took place, and again the police, now in great numbers, unmercifully beat up the demonstrators; but the courage of the workers was unbounded; handicapped and unarmed, they fought back. The resistance of the workers appeared to drive the police frantic, and according to reports, carefully verified afterwards, they began a campaign of terror.

"At midnight they raided working-class streets, smashing the lower windows with their batons, in order to terrify the

## THE CHANGING SCENE

women and children. Joe Rawlings and the whole of the branch committee of the N.U.W.M. were arrested at midnight and taken away in a Black Maria. In the early hours of the morning groups of police forced their way into working-class houses and assaulted workers who were known to have been associated with the demonstrations.

"The police terror continued the next night, and, as they entered working-class streets to beat up the inhabitants, the workers fought back by every means. Wire was stretched across the streets, over which the police stumbled, one falling into a manhole, the cover of which had been conveniently removed. Ashcans and other missiles were flung at the police in the streets from the windows of the working-class houses. The night of Sunday, September 18th, was one that the workers of Birkenhead will ever remember. Lorry loads of police descended upon blocks of thickly-populated tenements in the dead of night. Their pretexts were that they were 'searching for loot,' claiming that the workers had looted the shops in the demonstration. In the investigations afterwards, carried out by the International Class War Prisoners' Aid, women stated that their husbands and sons were dragged from their beds by the police, and beaten into unconsciousness, and then flung into the waiting Black Marias, with blood streaming from head, face and body wounds. They were carried off to the courts to be charged with riotous behaviour and assaults on the police, and then transferred to the hospitals to have their wounds dressed.

"The severity of the police terror can be gauged from the fact that over one hundred workers were taken to hospital with severe injuries, including cases of broken pelvis, fractured ribs, broken arms and legs. One worker who had been badly beaten-up drank ammonia. He died later, and at the inquest it was stated that when the police were informed of what he had done, they replied, 'Go back and tell him to take some more.' This evidence was printed in the Press without any coroner's comments. Further arrests on the Sunday night brought the total up to forty-four, one of whom appeared in court a week later on a stretcher.

"Bob Lovell, who was at that time in charge of the I.C.W.P.A., went into the district to conduct investigations. He later reported the following evidence :

## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

"Mrs. Davin, the wife of D. Davin, an ex-service man invalided out of the Army, having been gassed, said:

" 'On Friday, September 16th, the police came at midnight to the houses of St. Anne's Street, smashing the windows back and front with their batons, entering houses and batoning the occupants. This terror lasted until 4 o'clock in the morning.

" 'Next night, further attacks were made in St. Anne's Street, Payson Street and Victoria Street, and the screaming of the women and children was pitiful. Men fought back against this terror but were overwhelmed and arrested and bundled into the waiting Black Marias. The worst night of all was Sunday; we were fast asleep in bed at Morpeth Buildings, having had no sleep the previous nights, and my husband was very ill. My old mother, aged 68, is paralysed and could not sleep, she was so terrified. I have five children—a daughter 19, one 15, and sons 17, 12 and 6. Suddenly we were all awakened at the sound of the heavy motor vehicles. Hordes of police came rushing up the stairs of Morpeth Buildings and commenced smashing in the doors. The screams of women and children were terrible, we could hear the thuds of the blows from the batons and the terrific struggles in the rooms below, on the landing and on the stairs. Presently our door was forced open with a heavy iron instrument by the police. Twelve police rushed into the room and immediately knocked down my husband, splitting his head open and kicking him as he lay on the floor. The language of the police was terrible. When I tried to prevent them hitting my husband they commenced to baton me all over the arms and body; as they hit my husband and me the children were screaming, and the police shouted: "Shut up, you parish-fed bastards!" My eldest daughter, aged 19, also tried to protect me and her father. She too was batoned. In the next room my youngest daughter, aged 15, and the other children were with my mother, too terrified to move. The police then smashed open their door and attacked the other children. They flung my husband down the stairs and put him in the Black Maria where several other injured workers lay. I was in my night-clothes and rushed back into bed after they took my husband out, not knowing what to do. A picture of my husband in Army uniform, taken in India, was in a large frame, hanging on the wall, and before the police left they smashed this to smithereens

## THE CHANGING SCENE

with their batons. After taking my husband to the police station and charging him, he was then taken to the General Hospital, where it was found he had six open head wounds, one over the eye, and injuries to the body.' "

This was the treatment meted out to workers whose crime consisted in protesting against their allowances being reduced to a level at which they could not live, and whose demand was to be given work.

At one stage in the conflict the Mayor of Birkenhead made appeal for military assistance. But the unemployed stuck to the fight (and the degree of hardship involved by the Means Test can be seen from their desperate resistance). On the fourth day the P.A.C. decided to raise the scales of relief from 12s. to 15s.3d. for men, and from 10s. to 13s.6d. for women. There was a total of 45 workers placed on trial in connection with the Birkenhead struggles. Joe Rawlings, the leader, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, and Leo McGree, the Liverpool leader, was sent up for a similar sentence.

The savagery of such sentences is indication of the fear felt by our governors of those who agitate for a united unemployed workers movement pledged to gain better conditions and reduce unemployment by public work schemes at Trade Union rates. Yet the principal enemy of the N.U.W.M. has not been the governing class, but the Trade Union movement under Sir Walter Citrine. The N.U.W.M. has a fluctuating personnel, as men get or lose work. Unless a man can pass from his Trade Union to the N.U.W.M. and back, according as he is working or not, the power of the trade unions and the N.U.W.M. will both be weakened. But what made Mr. Citrine Sir Walter prevents this natural alliance.



## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

The problem involved in unemployed struggles is simple. The ruling class recognise that under capitalism there is no cure for unemployment. That is to say, that there will always be a certain core of men who from one year's end to another receive no work of any sort. In addition to that, there is a group that receives seasonal employment (very often at very low wages). Then there exists a further group which is in employment more often than not. It is, therefore, quite incorrect to think of the unemployed as a constant and united body. Unemployment is a present fear to all workers: and the experience of practically every worker at one time or another. The psychological effect caused by unemployed conditions extends therefore to the employed also. The demoralisation of unemployment is dual. To the unemployed worker it means that he is useless to society and to himself and his own people. The work of his hands and brain is unwanted. He is subjected to as much patronage and browbeating as he is prepared to allow. While he is drawing the dole, he is allowed representation from such a body as the N.U.W.M. But supposing that his period of unemployment is protracted, and he is brought before the Public Assistance Committee, he is allowed no representative to plead his case. He is submitted to the most rigorous examination, an examination which would turn any middle- or upper-class individual into a violent revolutionary. The Means Test man visits his home and scrutinises his belongings. Supposing that he has a piano, which he is buying on the hire-purchase system, it is rated as a luxury: and he cannot qualify for public assistance while he remains in possession of that piano. Supposing that by thrift he has saved a

## THE CHANGING SCENE

small sum of money against his old age, he cannot qualify for assistance until that money is spent and he is reduced to pauperdom. The Means Test man has the authority to pry and probe into the private affairs of any man who is foolish enough to be unable to obtain work.

The rates of unemployment relief stand at the moment as follows:

	s.	d.	
Single man ... ..	17	0	per week.
Wife ... ..	9	0	„
Each child below 14 ... ..	3	0	„

This scale holds good until the man's insurance stamps are exhausted. After that, he receives what is called 'transitional benefit' from the Unemployment Assistance Board, prior to being turned over to the P.A.C.

During this period the rates are as follows:

	s.	d.*	
Single man ... ..	15	0	per week.
Man and wife ... ..	24	0	„
Children, 14 to 18 ... ..	6	0	„
„ 11 to 14 ... ..	4	6	„
„ 8 to 11 ... ..	4	0	„
„ 5 to 8 ... ..	3	6	„
„ 3 to 5 ... ..	3	0	„

While he is on the U.A.B. a quarter of the man's dole is regarded as rent, with a minimum of 7s.6d. a week. If his rent comes to more than a quarter of his dole he receives an extra allowance. But if it is less than 7s.6d. a corresponding amount is deducted.

The P.A.C. rates of benefit are as follows:

	s.	d.	
Single man ... ..	12	6	per week.
Man and wife ... ..	23	0	„
Eldest child ... ..	4	0	„
Other children, each ... ..	3	0	„

This latter benefit theoretically comes from the local

rates, but is in fact backed by a central fund. The rates are slightly variable, and in some cases an extra half-crown is allowed to a single man (this bounty in effect amounting to a reward for 'good conduct'). In most districts a coal allowance of a hundredweight or its money equivalent each week is granted for six weeks prior to Christmas and six weeks afterwards.

It is helpful to work this out in terms of a typical family of five—man and wife, plus three children, one over and two under fourteen. In the first stage, such a family would receive 32s. a week over and above what the eldest child made, say, a further 7s.6d. Under the U.A.B., if no child was in work, the relief would be round 37s.6d. Under the P.A.C., the relief would be 33s. under the same circumstances.

But, in fact, the majority of cases are those in which certain members of the family are in work, and, furthermore, a lodger or lodgers help to defray the rent. For example, in many families the husband's or the wife's parents, drawing the old-age pension, are given their board and lodging in return for their 10s. a week. They pass their old age, if not in comfort, at any rate with a certain sense of security, living among the people of their own blood.

But as soon as such a family comes under the Means Test, they are regarded as 'lodgers,' in rather the way that the piano is regarded as a luxury. Their children's dole is reduced accordingly, and they become an intolerable burden, instead of pleasant members of the family. In his *Road to Wigan Pier*, Chapter I, George Orwell describes a lodging house over a tripe shop in the North. Two of the permanent lodgers were old-age pensioners, whom he describes thus.

"The old-age pensioners had, as usual, been driven from their homes by the Means Test. They handed their weekly 10s. over to the Brookers, (lodging-house keepers), and in return got the kind of accommodation you would expect for 10s.; that is, a bed in the attic and meals chiefly of bread-and-butter. One of them was of 'superior' type and was dying of some malignant disease—cancer, I believe. He only got out of bed on the days when he went to draw his pension. The other, called by everyone Old Jack, was an ex-miner aged seventy-eight, who had worked well over fifty years in the pits. He was alert and intelligent, but curiously enough he seemed only to remember his boyhood experiences and to have forgotten all about the modern mining machinery and improvements. He used to tell me tales of fights with savage horses in the narrow galleries underground. When he heard that I was arranging to go down several coal mines he was contemptuous and declared that a man of my size (six feet two and a half) would never manage the 'travelling'; it was no use telling him that the 'travelling' was better than it used to be. But he was friendly to everyone and used to give us all a fine shout of 'Good-night, boys!' as he crawled up the stairs to his bed somewhere under the rafters. ♦What I most admired about Old Jack was that he never cadged; he was generally out of tobacco towards the end of the week, but he always refused to smoke anyone else's. The Brookers had insured the lives of both old-age pensioners with one of the tanner-a-week companies. It was said that they were overheard anxiously asking the insurance-tout 'how long people lived when they'd got cancer.' "

## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

It is, however, not only the old people who are driven from their homes by the Means Test. The pressure is exerted equally on the children. In a case where a father is unemployed and his children are in employment the fact that the children are called upon to support their father out of their slender earnings not only humiliates the parent but increases the rancour of the children until they are driven to leave home. The family unit, consecrated by religion and regarded as the foundation of our society, is being split in every way by this Means Test. The shape and structure of our society is being changed continuously by this disruptive influence.

The Means Test has brought incalculable suffering on the working-class of this country. Only this week (first week of March) I have read the case of a man brought before the courts for an evasion of the Means Test. He was in the Army before the War. He joined up within a week of the declaration of the War. He was gassed and invalided out in 1917. For two years he received a pension which was later stopped, because he was claimed to have recovered sufficiently to get work. He was summoned for having taken three or four days casual work a week, without reporting it to the P.A.C. He had a wife and six children. He was condemned to three months hard labour.

George Orwell (op. cit. p. 78) writes: "It will be seen that the income of a family on the dole normally averages round about 30s. a week. One can write at least a quarter of this off as rent, which is to say that the average person, child or adult, has got to be fed, clothed, warmed, and otherwise cared-for for 6s. or 7s. a week. Enormous groups of people, probably at least

a third of the whole population of the industrial areas, are living at this level. The Means Test is very strictly enforced, and you are liable to be refused relief at the slightest hint that you are getting money from another source. Dock-labourers, for instance, who are generally hired by the half-day, have to sign on at a Labour Exchange twice daily; if they fail to do so it is assumed that they have been working and their 'dole is reduced correspondingly. I have seen cases of evasion of the Means Test, but I should say that in the industrial town, where there is still a certain amount of communal life and everyone has neighbours who know him, it is much harder than it would be in London. The usual method is for a young man who is actually living with his parents to get an accommodation address, so that supposedly he has a separate establishment and draws a separate allowance. But there is much spying and tale-bearing. One man I knew, for instance, was seen feeding his neighbour's chickens while the neighbour was away. It was reported to the authorities that he 'had a job feeding chickens' and he had great difficulty in refuting this. The favourite joke in Wigan was about a man who was refused relief on the ground that he 'had a job carting firewood.' He had been seen, it was said, carting firewood at night. He had to explain that he was not carting firewood but doing a moonlight flit. The 'firewood' was his furniture."

A constant war is waged with the authorities in the evasion of the Means Test. If anyone still doubts the existence of the 'class-struggle' he can see it made manifest in this war of evasion and punishment. As Orwell says, in the industrial towns—and even more so in rural areas—it is much more difficult to evade

the authorities of the P.A.C. The neighbours, many of whom have submitted to the same inquisition and succumbed, spy on their fellows to see that they are treated equally harshly. So that the corporate spirit of the street or the tenement is shattered by the Means Test, in the same way that the family is shattered.

On the other hand, wherever possible, and by whatever means possible, the Means Test man is deceived. There is one house of which I know in which five people live. There are two rooms upstairs and two rooms down. In the ground floor front, the parlour, sleeps a young man, a lodger. Husband and wife sleep in the first floor front and an only daughter and a girl lodger in the first floor back. The ground floor back is the kitchen-living room. When the Means Test man calls, he finds that the ground floor front is occupied by the girl lodger. The first floor back by daughter of the house. There is no young man stopping there, but 'the girl's brother' has left some of his spare clothes in a trunk in the first floor back. This is all the result of a quick change before the door is opened. Furthermore, though all five have their meals in the house, ostensibly only the family have their meals in. The female lodger is supposed to have her meals out and the male lodger not to exist at all.

The psychological effect of the Means Test inquisition is to produce extreme hostility and suspicion both on the side of the authorities and on the side of the unemployed. I referred in a previous chapter to the starvation of the social sense of the modern Englishman. But here we come to a more practical frustration. The unemployed man not only feels that he has no share in the government of his country: but he knows that the government of his

## THE CHANGING SCENE

country exists to beat his standard of living as low as possible. It is his enemy. And he is forced into the same position as the criminal by the natural desire to keep his children and his wife properly clothed and fed. At its best, his attitude will be that of the revolutionary, the man who knowing that present society does not represent his needs seeks to build a society that will do so. If he adopts such an attitude, he will be victimised in every possible way. At the slightest excuse, his assistance will be reduced or totally abolished. He will be stigmatised as a 'red,' the paid agent of Moscow. Every type of prejudice will be raised against him. He will be a raper of women, a blasphemer against religion, a rat, the scum of the earth. Alternatively, he may adopt the morality of the pilferer and the pickpocket. Instead of waging his fight with injustice openly, he will cheat the authorities wherever possible. Though he may succeed in getting slightly more relief than the authorities would otherwise allow him, he becomes emotionally degraded. Fear strikes at the root of his self-respect and he is on the way to becoming the rat that the revolutionary is accused of being. The worst example of this process is the cadger and smarmer, the man driven by the force of economic need to ask for help as the tribute of pity or payment for flattery rather than as a natural right. The church and charity organisations gather such people round them, teaching the tricks they have to do to ingratiate themselves: as trainers teach performing seals with bits of fish. In *Smoky Crusade* R. M. Fox describes a pre-War Hunger March on London, the men coming down the Strand with collection boxes, a band of organised beggars. Hannington describes the post-War Hunger Marches,



## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

and there are no collection boxes. They have learnt that the solution to the problem of unemployment doesn't rest on the palliatives of charity. They know that the spectacular generosity of Lord Nuffield in resigning a portion of his excess profits to a distressed areas fund is ultimately as ineffective as the tuppences and threepences given to ex-service men selling boot-laces in the street. They are men who have sworn an oath, "I, a member of the great army of unemployed, being without work and compelled to suffer through no fault of my own, do hereby solemnly swear with all the strength and resolution of my being, to loyally abide by, and carry out the instructions of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement, with the deliberate intention of pressing forward the claims of the unemployed so that no man, woman or child suffers hunger or want this winter.

"Further, realising that only by the abolition of this hideous capitalist system can the horror of unemployment be removed from our midst, I here and now take upon myself a binding oath, to never cease from active strife against this system until capitalism is abolished and our country and all its resources truly belong to the people."

With all the will in the world, it is very difficult, and even impossible, for people of middle- and upper-class origin fully to envisage the life of the working-classes, in or out of employment. From a very early age the seeds of the class-war have been growing in them: and even those whose intelligence and human sympathies have driven into alliance with the working-classes, have to recognise and fight against the deep-

seated class hatred, which runs entirely counter to their intellectually formulated ideas. Furthermore, to many people less politically advanced, the problem of unemployment and the low conditions of the working-class arouse at the same time an uneasy sense of sympathy and a desperate desire for the preservation of things as they are. A man with an income of five hundred a year and over cannot avoid being in a state of conflict, if he allows himself to contemplate the gradations of wealth that he sees around him. He knows from his own experience that his wealth is derived from activities of varying social utility and that there is no correspondence between his reward and the utility or strength of his effort. He is led to temporise, either by turning away from politics and indulging a vague and useless sympathy with the working-class, or by professing a belief in gradualism, that everything is growing better and better. If he does not temporise but allows himself to be drawn into the working-class movement, he must slough off his old prejudices: and he can do that only by positive work. The intellectual denial of prejudices engrained in childhood will result only in the most extraordinary distorted thinking and action. It results, for example, in the discarding of the fine qualities of the bourgeois tradition, as well as of the prejudices. It idealises the working-class by an inversion of the bourgeois ideology. Whereas before the worker was shunned, whoever he was, now he is welcomed as indiscriminately. His personal qualities of courage, will-power, originality and endurance are neglected for his trade and the horniness of his hands. This is proletarian romanticism, as far removed from the working-class as the opinions of Colonel Blimp.

## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

The truer picture of the working-class as I see it, and I admit that it is very hard to generalise, is that the working-class by the nature of its position in society is the dynamic force of Great Britain. The life of man, either in a civilised or primitive community, is built upon the primary needs of life: that is to say, food, clothing, shelter, to continue life in the individual; sex, to continue life in the race. These are the primary realities of existence, the essential conditions of all culture and secondary qualities of civilisation. Yet the only class in this country which sees these things realistically is the working-class. And that's not surprising, because they're not in the position to be highfalutin about them.

Yet within the working-class there are degrees of intelligence and integrity. On the extreme left there is the militant worker to whom the attainment of socialism is everything. He is prepared to risk his own livelihood, endanger his life and even his family, for a cause which he holds to be really important. He may be a fanatic, with the moral force and intensity of one who concentrates upon a single aim, sometimes without humour, often without mercy. Consistent with this, he may often be ambitious for himself, anxious to wield power, to lead others. He may resent opposition, be overbearing and dogmatic, resent the suave cleverness of those better educated than himself. At the same time he has a courage, a hatred of fraud and injustice that leads him into bitter opposition to oppressors.

Or again, a rank and filer, as opposed to a leader springing from the working-class. He has trust in the men that speak straight. He will follow in a strike, when suddenly the small irritations and impositions of

months are centred in a single dispute however trivial. He is distrustful of his own intellectual powers and is inclined to rely too much upon the authority of the leaders whom he trusts. Yet once he has been given a plan of action, he will carry it out with vigour and resource. There are many such men in the trade unions, jealous of their trade union rights and yet politically unawakened. These men will strike at the slightest infringement of their rights, yet in many cases will take no action where the issues are political.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the trade union members are politically backward. They cannot see the connection between trade and political issues. On the other hand, they are advanced in comparison to the workers who have not been touched by the union movement. These consist chiefly of agricultural labourers, and workers in the new light industries centred on London or in the retail trades. The raw material for fascism is to be found among these non-union workers: and unless the trade unions are able to give a strong lead, which will draw these workers into the movement, there is a grave danger that they will be drawn into the fascist movement.

It is for this reason that the renewal of trade union militancy among the rank and file armament and transport workers is strongly to be encouraged. There is strong reason to believe that if their policy, as usual discounted above, succeeds in goading the leaders of

<sup>1</sup> For example, trade union men are loading scrap iron for shipment to Germany at the present time, when we are having to import our own scrap. They know that this is to be used for armament purposes, yet their attitude is one of cynical indifference, like that of their employer. The argument of the employers is that they get higher prices from Germany: the argument of the employees is that when a war comes, they'll act as cannon fodder anyway and there is no need to lose a week's work and possibly get penalised through getting no backing from their trade union officials. If they were certain of a firm lead from headquarters, their attitude might well be less fatalistic.

## THE CONDITION OF LABOUR

Transport House into progressive action the Trade Union Movement as a whole will make tremendous progress and finally eradicate the defeatism that has existed in the movement since the General Strike. The union of all labour forces not only for trade bargaining, but also for the enforcement of a socialist programme, in collaboration with the liberals and the disaffiliated socialist movements, is the only possible way in which the problem of labour can be solved. The futility of the capitalist efforts to deal with unemployment is seen in the figures. To-day at a time of boom, when the *Daily Telegraph* proudly announces that more men are in work than ever before in our history, more men are out of work than ever before the War. The registered figures of a million and a half unemployed means in fact nearer five million people (when we consider the dependants of the unemployed) existing in a state of penury and psychological uncertainty.

In the next chapter we shall consider what conditions of life are like on the dole.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *Food, Clothing, Lodging*

Group.	Income per Head per Week.	Average Expenditure on Food.	Estimated Population of Group.	
			Numbers.	Percentage.
1.	Up to 10s.	4s.	4,500,000	10
2.	10s. to 15s.	6s.	9,000,000	20
3.	15s. to 20s.	8s.	9,000,000	20
4.	20s. to 30s.	10s.	9,000,000	20
5.	30s. to 45s.	12s.	9,000,000	20
6.	Over 45s.	14s.	4,500,000	10
Average 30s.		9s.		

THESE FIGURES are taken from Sir John Orr's Report. And, as usual, the statistics are disputable. For example, Mr. O. R. Hobson, in *Lloyds Bank Monthly Review* for July, 1934, makes the following calculation for the income figures of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. "The National Income of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is estimated at about £3,400,000,000, equivalent to £74 per head of the population, a figure which does not suggest that the danger of inconveniently large production is very imminent. But of this £3,400,000,000, about £2,550,000,000 represents income belonging to income tax payers—for this is the amount of 'actual income' assessed to income tax in 1932-33, and the 'actual income' figure of the Commissioners of Inland Revenue has been shewn by Professor Bowley and Sir Josiah Stamp to be very close to that part of the 'National Income which accrues to the income tax

## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

paying class.' Thus the aggregate income of the class below the income tax exemption limit (£100 assessable income, equivalent to £125 earned income) was, say, £850,000,000. Now the total number of income tax payers in 1932-33 was 3,500,000, and if we assume that each of these has, on the average, two and a half dependants, we arrive at the figure of 12,250,000 as the number of persons in the 'income tax paying class.' Subtraction from the total population of 46,000,000 therefore gives the number of persons whose incomes are below the exemption limit as 33,750,000. Dividing this last figure into the residual income of £850,000,000 we have a figure of approximately £25 as the average annual income per capita of the non-income tax paying classes."

If Mr. O. R. Hobson's figures are to be accepted, it seems likely that the percentage of the population to be included in Group 1 is greater than the 10 per cent. allowed by Sir John Orr. Be that as it may, Sir John Orr's Report is sufficiently startling. Sir John Orr, a specialist in dietetics, reaches the following conclusions with regard to the adequacy of the food purchasable in these different income groups. His standard of adequacy is such that no improvement could be caused in health by an increase in the quantity of food contained in it.

"The average diet of group 1 is inadequate for health in all the constituents considered; group 2 is adequate only in total proteins and total fat; group 3 is adequate in energy value, protein and fat, but below standard in minerals and vitamins; group 4 is adequate in iron, phosphorus and vitamins, but probably below standard in calcium; group 5 has an ample margin of safety in everything with the possible exception of calcium; in group 6 the standard requirements are exceeded in every case."—(Orr Report, pp. 33 and 36.)

The Orr Report was not made for tendentious reasons. Sir John Orr and his assistants undertook their research and published their findings on the behalf of the British Government. We have, therefore, no reason to discount the report, since the conclusions are against rather than in the interest of those on whose behalf the investigation was made. This conservative estimate states that 10 per cent. of the population are inadequately fed in every particular, while a further 20 per cent. receive sufficient energy-giving nourishment, but insufficient nourishment in all foods calculated to build up the body and preserve health. A further 20 per cent. get insufficient minerals and vitamins, while 20 per cent. more lack only calcium (which means that they can afford everything except an adequate supply of milk). The next 20 per cent. also may suffer from insufficient milk, while the upper 10 per cent. has plenty of everything.

Now the peculiar thing about the Orr Report is that the argument used to prove that the report is alarmist and sensational is that the standard of living is higher to-day than it has ever been. If 90 per cent. of the population is undernourished in one form or another to-day, what must its condition have been before the War? And usually this argument is followed by some such statement as "And yet we won the War." It is for some reason considered the rebuttal of an evil to point out that it has persisted for a long time: as, for example, the upholders of slavery pleaded its long life against the abolitionists. But in fact the argument cuts the other way. If undernourishment has been the lot of the majority of people in this country, it is all the stronger reason that it should be attacked by every means at our disposal, since the cumulative effect of



## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

undernourishment generation after generation must increasingly degrade the standard of health.<sup>1</sup> The findings of the Orr Report could be confirmed by any public hospital or social worker. What is saved in food is lost in the expenditure of health services that would not be necessary for a population adequately fed. The ravages of disease are due to undernourishment more than to any other one factor, firstly because the undernourished are more likely to catch diseases, and secondly because they have less resistance with which to throw them off. But though these facts were known to parents, teachers, doctors and social workers, no attention was paid to the question until the Government wanted more recruits for the Army, which needed to be increased owing to the bungling and half-hearted policy pursued since the last war. Actually, when the Government appealed for recruits, the recruits were forthcoming, despite Mr. Duff-Cooper's protests to the contrary. But, the difficulty was that the men who wished to join the armed forces were for the greater part so poorly fed that they had to be rejected. Hence the National Fitness Scheme, seeking to cure the weakness caused by undernourishment by physical exercise.

It might be thought that the Government on discovering how low the standard of health was in the nation would be alarmed on the humanitarian grounds that people ought to have health as the condition of a full and constructive life. But this has not been the case. The standard of health must be raised, in order that we may have good cannon fodder. Men for whom they

<sup>1</sup> An effect which is aggravated by the fact that the poorer the family, the more prolific it is.

have had no use in the production of utilities, the Government now discovers may be needed to destroy their fellow-workers abroad. Their labour is not marketable; but their lives still might be.

The Government makes little pretence that their need for fit men is not social but militaristic, as the following extract from the *Daily Telegraph*, March 10th, will show:

"Lord Nuffield has promised £50,000—if another £100,000 is raised—in support of the appeal of the Navy League for the Sea Cadets Corps.

"The Lord Mayor of London, Sir George Broadbridge, made this announcement yesterday at a meeting at the Mansion House, over which he presided.

"The story behind the gift by Lord Nuffield was told by Lord Lloyd, president of the Navy League.

"He said that he told Lord Nuffield that he had given millions for curing sick people, and asked him: 'Why not get hold of the other end of the stick and tackle prevention of sickness by helping to give our lads healthy bodies?' Lord Nuffield's promise was the result.

"He next went to Viscount Wakefield, who, with his *unquenchable public spirit*, gave £1,000. Morgan Grenfell & Co., the bankers, and the firm of Vickers each gave £1,000, and the Maharajah of Patiala opened the Indian list with a like amount.

"The Committee of Lloyd's had also responded with £100, and he had great faith that so fine a cause would not be allowed to fail for need of funds.

"Lord Lloyd appealed to the City Corporation, banks and other City houses and organisations, and to every principal and clerk to contribute. Training of youth was as necessary for defence as the building of battleships, yet it was estimated that no less than 70 per cent. of our youth did not get any physical training.

" 'When I go to Germany or to Italy,' Lord Lloyd proceeded, 'and see what splendid things are being done for every boy and girl under dictatorship, I envy them at any rate that—if no other—fruit of their system.

## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

“‘But in those countries money is ruthlessly torn from the hands of the richer classes to pay for this training of the country’s youth.

“‘If our business people will not do as much voluntarily under our free systems the future of this country, both from a social and from a defence point of view, will fare very ill.

“‘But it is not only under dictatorships that youth is better served than here. In France the system of military service for all achieves the same results.

“‘In democratic Switzerland the same is true, in Belgium also; and in Sweden, Norway and Denmark the attention paid to the physique of the nation has long been the admiration of the world.’

“The Lord Mayor said that the City of London, in common with other powers throughout the country at this time, was vitally concerned with the question of defence. It was desired that in the extension of the Navy League Cadet movement a City of London unit should be included and made the spear-head of the whole organisation.

“Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, stated that the value of the training and discipline in the Sea Cadet Corps was very much appreciated in his present office because of what it did for those who joined up.”

Many of the implications of this extract are interesting. Firstly, there is the identification of physical training with war service. This is not stated openly, but taken for granted. Secondly, the leading donors, Lord Nuffield, Viscount Wakefield, the firm of Vickers, have a very obvious economic interest in ‘defence.’ Thirdly, there is the charming threat, levelled by Lord Lloyd, that if employers are unwilling to support a voluntary form of fascism, they will be compelled to do so in the end. And, finally, there is the posing of a dilemma to the youth of the country: be ready to surrender your life, fighting on the behalf of the business interests of bankers, armament firms, Indian Maharajahs and the City of

## THE CHANGING SCENE

London, and you shall have health: refuse and you shall be half-starved.<sup>1</sup>

In the last chapter I gave the rates for unemployment relief. But what exactly do they mean in terms of living conditions. What is this level, compared to which service in the armed forces may appear luxurious, if short-sighted?

Let us take food first.

A number of different dietaries have been advanced, shewing how you may live on a weekly food budget of 4s. a week. Here is one, which appeared in the *New Statesman and Nation* and the *News of the World*. It gives as good an impression as any:

	s.	d.
3 wholemeal loaves ... ..	1	0 (now 1/1½)
½ lb. margarine ... ..	0	2½
½ lb. dripping ... ..	0	3
1 lb. cheese ... ..	0	7
1 lb. onions ... ..	0	1½
1 lb. carrots ... ..	0	1½
1 lb. broken biscuits ... ..	0	4
2 lb. dates ... ..	0	6
1 tin evaporated milk... ..	0	5
10 oranges ... ..	0	5
	<hr/>	
Total ... ..	3	11½
	<hr/>	

The writer of the original letter, claiming to use this diet, was as far as I remember a woman. She made no entry for fuel because she said that she couldn't afford

<sup>1</sup> The hypocrisy of these recruiting functions seems to be competitive. One member of the aristocracy generously said he'd give half a crown to every man present at his meeting if they would join the Territorials. This, he said, was remarkably generous, because there were some two hundred eligible men present. Yet even a hospital will pay you more than that for your body, and they at least allow you to die a natural death.

## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

to cook her meals. It is quite conceivable that the letter was a hoax, because it is impossible, at least for me, to conceive of anyone living on such a diet. Yet hoax or no hoax, it represents about the wisest expenditure that could be made on so small a sum. It contains the maximum food value for the money. From the dietetician's point of view, it is wise spending, yet it omits another essential of nutrition, tastiness. Such a diet is unpalatable. How many readers of this book can imagine themselves able to exist on this diet even for a week, sitting down to an evening meal of cold dripping and wholemeal bread, garnished by chopped raw carrots? Certain rich people, whose trouble is not to support life but sagging stomachs, are firm adherents of scientific dietary. They pay fourteen guineas a week to be shut up and fed on orange juice. And I have no doubt that the dietiticians earn their fourteen guineas, because their job is not only to supply their patients with nothing but orange juice, but also to supply the will power the patient himself lacks. In the cases which we are considering, there is no money available to pay nurses to limit you to your 3s. 11½d. a week.

Compare this diet with that included in the weekly budget of an unemployed miner.<sup>1</sup> "This man's allowance was 32s. a week, and besides his wife he had two children, one aged two years and five months and the other ten months. Here is the list:

							s.	d.
Rent	...	...	...	...	...	...	9	0½
Clothing Club	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	0
Coal	...	...	...	...	...	...	2	0
Gas	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	3
Milk	...	...	...	...	...	...	0	10½

<sup>1</sup> *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell, pp. 92-3.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

	s.	d.
Union fees ... ..	0	3
Insurance (on the children) ...	0	2
Meat ... ..	2	6
Flour (2 stone) ... ..	3	4
Yeast ... ..	0	4
Potatoes ... ..	1	0
Dripping ... ..	0	10
Margarine ... ..	0	10
Bacon ... ..	1	2
Sugar ... ..	1	9
Tea ... ..	1	0
Jam... ..	0	7½
Peas and cabbage ... ..	0	6
Carrots and onions ... ..	0	4
Quaker Oats ... ..	0	4½
Soap, powders, blue, etc. ... ..	0	10
<hr/>		
Total ...	£1	12 0

"In addition to this, three packets of dried milk were supplied weekly for the baby by the Infants' Welfare Clinic.

"One or two comments are needed here. To begin with, the list leaves out a great deal—blackening, pepper, salt, vinegar, matches, kindling wood, razor blades, replacements of utensils and wear and tear of furniture and bedding, to name the first few that come to mind. Any money spent on these would mean reduction on some other item. A more serious charge is tobacco. This man happened to be a small smoker, but even so his tobacco would hardly cost less than a shilling a week, meaning a further reduction on food. • The 'clothing clubs' into which unemployed people pay so much a week are run by big drapers in all the industrial towns. Without them it would be impossible for unem-

## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

ployed people to buy new clothes at all. I don't know whether or not they buy bedding through these clubs. This particular family, as I happen to know, possessed next to no bedding."

As Orwell points out, omitting 5½d. a week for the baby, you have 16s. a week with which to provide three people with their entire nourishment, including fuel. Of this, 3s.3d. is spent on fuel and lighting, so that the remainder of the budget is substantially the same as the scientific budget above: 3s.11½d. in one case, 4s.1d. in the other.

Orwell draws the comparison of the two budgets. "The miner's family spend only 10d. a week on green vegetables and 10½d. on milk (remember that one of them is a child of less than three years old), and nothing on fruit; but they spend 1s.9d. on sugar (about eight pounds of sugar, that is) and 1s. on tea. The half-crown spent on meat *might* represent a small joint and the materials for a stew; probably as often as not it would represent four or five tins of bully beef. The basis of their diet, therefore, is white bread and margarine, corned beef, sugared tea and potatoes—an appalling diet. Would it not be better if they spent more money on wholesome things like oranges and wholemeal bread or if they even, like the writer of the letter to the *New Statesman*, saved on fuel and ate their carrots raw? Yes, it would, but the point is that no ordinary human being is ever going to do such a thing. The ordinary human being would sooner starve than live on brown bread and raw carrots. And the peculiar evil is this, that the less money you have, the less inclined you feel to spend it on wholesome food. . . . When you are unemployed, which is to say when you are underfed,

harassed, bored and miserable, you don't *want* to eat wholesome food. You want something a little bit 'tasty.' There is always some cheaply pleasant thing to tempt you. Let's have three penn'orth of chips! Run out and buy us a twopenny ice-cream! Put the kettle on and we'll all have a nice cup of tea! *That* is how your mind works when you are at P.A.C. level. White bread-and-marg. and sugared tea don't nourish you to any extent, but they are *nicer* (at least most people think so) than brown bread-and-dripping and cold water. Unemployment is an endless misery that has got to be constantly palliated, and especially with tea, the Englishman's opium. A cup of tea or even an aspirin is much better as a temporary stimulant than a crust of brown bread."

Thus Orwell describes the equation between nourishment and 'tastiness,' the non-scientific element that has to be taken into account in all human affairs. And when you have taken into account that factor playing havoc with the scientific minimum diets, you have also to take into account the calculation, made by the Ministry of Health in 1933, that the minimum sum capable of preserving health for one person was 5s.1½d. per week, while the British Medical Association, less limited by notions of economy, put the figure at 5s.10½d. So that by either count the miner's family and the rest of that 10 per cent. of the population living at that standard are receiving at least 20 and maybe 30 per cent. less for their food budget than the bare minimum.

Supposing that every class in society was breeding at an equal rate, this situation would be bad enough. But as it is, from 20 to 25 per cent. of the children in this country belong to that lowest income group. The children, about whose gymnastics Lord Lloyd grows



## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

eloquent in the Mansion House, haven't got enough to eat. And when they go to school, they sit shivering in class-rooms, too cold to learn, with the wind coming under the door and the rain dripping into the latrines.

I am not against children having physical exercises, I am not even against their receiving military training. (With the fascist powers on the rampage, it would be madness). But I am against physical exercise being used as a cheap remedy for starvation: and I am against young boys being driven to fight in wars that have no meaning for them. I am against social services rising only from militaristic motives.

What about clothing?

In the last twenty-five years it has become cheaper. Artificial products have made it possible for imitation fabrics to be made at a low cost. More people are smart. Yet how do these 10s. a week per person families manage for clothes?

The clue is in the miner's entry Clothing Fund. Clothes, furniture, anything, in fact, that costs more than a few shillings, is supplied through the hire-purchase system. So much a week, and the tallyman comes round to collect it. These payments drag on month after month, the tallyman earning his commission on fresh purchases. The percentage of bad debts is pretty high, even though the serving of legal-looking documents often causes a family to start repayments. Usually the tallyman induces the family after a lapse in payment of say a shilling a week, to take a further article and pay one and sixpence a week. As there is a heavy loss on bad debts, those who make their payments in full are being charged sufficient to pay not only interest and profit on the articles they have bought, but also to

recoup the bad debts. In certain cases the shopkeeper is also a hire-purchaser from the manufacturer, handing over the financing of the business to him.

Cheapness and flashiness are the requisites of articles sold on this system: cheapness in order to furnish a wide margin of profit, flashiness in order to induce the householder to sign the contract and make the first payment. As usual, Christ's cynical epigram is true. "To them that have, shall be given. From them that have not shall be taken away, even that which they have." The poor, buying in small quantities or in small instalments, get worse value for their money, as they have less. I pass a pawnshop on my daily bus. The owner boasts his reasonable terms of lending. Only 5d. interest per £1 per month. And what business man would borrow at 25 per cent. per annum?

It would be unfair to regard the tallyman himself as the oppressor. He is a man as hard up as the people whom he pesters for their weekly payments. He works in all weathers, sometimes for fourteen or sixteen hours a day. He is the pawn, the equivalent in the hire-purchase racket of a buffer state in imperialism. Yet it is the tallyman who has to do the dirty work, to find the 'selling' angle, and then the 'paying' angle: to threaten, cajole, sympathise, amuse or frighten, until he gets the money which he has to pay over to his superiors. No tallyman lasts long. If he doesn't make good, he's flung out on his neck or walks out (since many are paid only on commission). If he does make good, he leaves as soon as he possibly can. It is a job which levies as great a toll on a man's self-respect as on his health.

And that's how in the first year of the reign of King

## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

George VI most people living in his realm buy their clothes and furniture.

And how they live ?

Housing conditions are relative. In a mid-Victorian report on Housing conditions, the author complained indignantly that in one house into which he went, he found fourteen people sleeping in a bed only meant to hold six.

There is no doubt at all that housing conditions are better to-day than they were before the War. There is not so much overcrowding, for one thing.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, compared with the necessary conditions of health, the overcrowding is still scandalous. In many cases the new building schemes for slum-clearance have merely substituted one overcrowded area for another. It is impossible for families to afford to pay the rents of adequately large flats or houses. They have to sub-let or take a smaller flat. It is impossible to keep a place clean and healthy, when there is a large family of young children living in a small space.<sup>2</sup> •

There are drawbacks in certain of the rehousing schemes being put through at the moment. The plan of spreading council houses on the outskirts of our provincial towns is making trouble for the future, creating traffic problems and so on. Walter Gropius

<sup>1</sup> The problem of overcrowding is double. It may be due to lack of accommodation or to high rents. In the Rhondda Valley, in many villages there are houses unoccupied, while the rest are overcrowded, simply because the owners (usually the colliery) charge such high rents, or, alternatively, the P.A.C. relief is so low.

<sup>2</sup> Social workers are not allowed to spread the knowledge of birth control. As usual, Church and State are in agreement, the Church on moral grounds, the State because capitalism depends on a plentiful supply of cheap labour to lower wages in peace-time, and man the armed forces in war. Hence the scare about the decrease in population, even though capitalism has shewn itself unable to employ 1,600,000 people, even at the height of a boom.

is much closer to the requirements of the future, when he envisages large blocks of flats, housing a thousand people or more and forming their own community and community life. These blocks could be set apart on their own ground, and the ground space thereby saved could be used for gardens, playing grounds, tennis courts, gymnasias and so on. Having their own shops, lecture rooms, cinema, clinic and crèche, they would not be tied to the centre of the town, but would have their own centre of gravity.

But even though the new housing schemes lack foresight, in some cases cause unnecessary privations through the increase of rent and in others lack some elements of privacy, they are a tremendous advance in the conquest of the slums. A lot of work has been done. Very much more remains to do. Here is Orwell's description of housing in the North:

"As you walk through the industrial towns you lose yourself in labyrinths of little brick houses blackened by smoke, festering in planless chaos round mazy alleys and little cindered yards where there are stinking dustbins and lines of grimy washing and half-ruinous W.C.s. The interiors of these houses are always very much the same, though the number of rooms varies between two and five. All have an almost exactly similar living room, ten or fifteen feet square, with an open kitchen range; in the larger ones there is a scullery as well, in the smaller ones the sink and copper are in the living-room. At the back there is the yard, or part of a yard shared by a number of houses, just big enough for the dustbin and the W.C. Not a single one has hot water laid on. You might walk, I suppose, through literally hundreds of miles of streets inhabited by miners, every one of whom, when he is in work, gets black from head to foot every day, without ever passing a house in which one could have a bath. It would have been very simple to instal a hot-water system working from the kitchen range, but the builder saved perhaps ten pounds on each house by not doing so, and at the

## FOOD, CLOTHING, LODGING

time when these houses were built no one imagined that miners wanted baths. . . .

" . . . Where rents are high the difficulty is not to find houses but to find tenants. Walk down any street in Mayfair and you will see 'To Let' boards in half the windows. But in the industrial areas the mere difficulty of getting hold of a house is one of the worst aggravations of poverty. . . . People will put up with anything—any hole and corner slum, any misery of bugs and rotting floors and cracking walls, any extortion of skinflint landlords and blackmailing agents—simply to get a roof over their heads. I have been into appalling houses, houses in which I would not live a week if you paid me, and found that the tenants had been there twenty and thirty years and only hoped they might have the luck to die there. In general these conditions are taken as a matter of course, though not always. Some people hardly seem to realise that such things as decent houses exist and look on bugs and leaking roofs as acts of God; others rail bitterly against their landlords; but all cling desperately to their houses lest worse should befall. So long as the housing shortage continues the local authorities cannot do much to make existing houses more livable. They can 'condemn' a house, but they cannot order it to be pulled down till the tenant has another house to go to; and so the condemned houses remain standing, and are all the worse for being condemned, because naturally the landlord will not spend more than he can help on a house which is going to be demolished sooner or later.<sup>1</sup> In a town like Wigan, for instance, there are over two thousand houses standing which have been condemned for years, and whole sections of the town would be condemned *en bloc* if there were any hope of other houses being built to replace them. Towns like Leeds and Sheffield have scores of thousands of 'back to back' houses which are all of a condemned type but will remain standing for decades."

Even in what they call 'the prosperous South' very similar conditions prevail. London, as was shewn in the

<sup>1</sup> I live in Rotherhithe and the study where I work looks out on to the roof of the house next door, which has been condemned. Though it will probably not be pulled down for three years, the dislodged slates (which are not broken) are not replaced. The wood beneath is sodden with wet and rotting. Yet the cost of the repair would not be more than five shillings at the most.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

L.C.C. Elections, is facing up to her responsibilities. But elsewhere the powers of reaction are holding back the forces of socialism, through the disunity of the Left. Even in London, the unity of the Left was denied and fought against by Mr. Herbert Morrison: though in fact he owed the increased majority on the council to the co-operation of the *Daily Worker* and the *News Chronicle*, and in North Lambeth, where Mr. G. R. Strauss openly declared himself in favour of an united front, his majority increased by 5,000 votes.

The housing problem cannot be solved in a few years, the legacy of the nineteenth century is too great. But where Labour is in power, it is being tackled with courage and vigour. On this simple point it is becoming clear what party wishes to abolish slums and what is prepared to make every possible sacrifice of the working-class in order to reduce expenditure.

Yet Municipal Government is incapable of accomplishing even its own plans with the maximum speed and economy, unless it has the co-operation of Parliament.<sup>1</sup> There is only one course for those who wish to see energetic measures taken to deal with unemployment, malnutrition and housing. That course is to overthrow the National Government at the earliest opportunity and to replace it with an United Front Government, pledged to a vigorous short-term policy. \*

<sup>1</sup> The National Government's denial of a grant for the reconstruction of Waterloo Bridge from the Road Fund shews the power of Parliament to penalise a local council on political grounds. The National Government and not the Socialist L.C.C. were responsible for the rise of the London rates. •

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Epilogue*

WHEN GEORGE V came to the throne, he was regarded with dislike or with indifference. His father had commanded popular sentiment by the display of sportsmanlike qualities which the common run of men envied and admired. His failings were in the eyes of the public manly failings, the love of sport, beauty and good living. His ambassadorial trips to the Continent gave the country as much pleasure as they gave anxiety to many diplomats. His position was the favoured one of the elderly and good-humoured rip.

King George V and his Queen ascended the throne under a disadvantage. There was no myth round them; no glamour surrounded them. They were two people, only distinguished from others by the fact that they were the son and daughter-in-law of the late King. Hereditary succession appeared at its most banally biological.

Four years after the King ascended the throne, Europe was plunged in War. During that time the King and Queen, by the faithful execution of their duty as figureheads, endeared themselves to the people of the Empire. They did not come out of the War as popular heroes. Still no glamour attached to them. But for many people they symbolised something solid and rather stodgy that had actually almost passed away in the War. While George V remained alive, it was possible to believe that the world had not changed. The snug, suburban ideals might still be regarded as

the most important ideals of English life. Many middle-aged people to whom I talked at the time of the Royal Funeral made remarks such as: "I feel that it's the end of an age, somehow." Or, "He stood for security."

These remarks were valueless either as a tribute to the character of George V or as an assessment of world affairs. But they indicated at least one of the uses to which the late King had been put. To many people, especially those of bourgeois origin, the King was a welcome barrier between themselves and reality. The security which they thought the King's death had terminated had never existed for many people and had been increasingly threatened during the whole of his reign. But by living, by remaining apparently so startlingly unaware of the changing world, he had given the lie to the experience of their own lives.

During the reign of George V, and especially just after the War, it was common talk of the sort you hear in buses or in pubs, that there would never be another King of England. "People won't stand for it," they said. And to counteract this fatalistic republicanism, every device was used to popularise the Prince of Wales. He was sent on tours of the Empire, and photographed and gushed over in *Home Notes* as Prince Charming and elected president of Golf Courses and written up as The Pragger Wagger.

As a result of this publicity, a myth gathered round him of rather the same nature as that which had surrounded his grandfather. He symbolised the humane qualities of loving sport, good-fellowship, pleasure, rather than the puritan virtues of his father, duty, worthiness, discretion and so on. His accession was welcomed by many people belonging to his generation,



## EPILOGUE

the war generation. His reign was going to be like a breath of fresh air after the rather musty meeting-house atmosphere of his father's.

Edward VIII succeeded his father with considerable popular support. The country was prepared for the death of his father by his long illness and his failure in health in recent years. They rallied to the idea of a new king very quickly. It might mean the passing of an age: but it might also mean the beginning of a new one. During his visit to the Distressed Areas in South Wales, he was said to have taken from miners copies of the *Daily Worker* and put them in his pocket to read. His request for the presence of the late Commissioner of Distressed Areas seemed to shew an impatience with the carefully prepared tour he was being taken. "He's different," certain workers began to say. "He's interested. He wants to find out the facts."

Whether he found out the true facts or not, the King suddenly made a statement. He did not inspect the Distressed Areas and say, "It's very distressing." He said, "Something will be done. That I promise you."

Something was done immediately. The Simpson scandal was released by the Bishop of Bradford, and tossed to the London Press. In ten days the King was forced to abdicate voluntarily in favour of (after much discussion) his brother, the Duke of York.

Now King Edward VIII is the Duke of Windsor: the Duke of York is George VI, called George and not Albert in order to preserve in the public mind the ideal of his father.<sup>1</sup>

The National Government has rushed through a

<sup>1</sup> Thereby frustrating once more Queen Victoria's wish that some day an Albert should be crowned King of England, to reign vicariously for her consort.

## THE CHANGING SCENE

Special Areas Bill, preventing amendments under Standing Orders 69. Two millions of pounds are to be devoted to the rehabilitation of the distressed areas. Fifteen hundred millions are to be raised on loan for the preparation of a war. King George V established himself as a popular monarch at the expense of four years of world conflict. What is the price of his son's popularity?

# INDEX

- ABBEY THEATRE, 49  
 Abyssinia, 141, 195  
 Act of Algeciras, 216  
 Adler, 109  
 Æschylus, 154  
 Agadir Incident, 215 *et seq.*  
*Agamemnon of Æschylus*, 65  
 Aix-les-Bains, 153  
 American Book Union, 118  
 Anand, Mulk Raj., 118  
 Anti-Suffragist Society, 170  
 Aran Islanders, 55  
 Aristocracy, 145  
 Arlen, Michael, 114  
 Arts Theatre Club, 49  
*Ascent of F.6*, 61 *et seq.*  
 Asquith, 12  
 Athlone, Earl of, 162  
 Auden, W. H., 60-5  
  
 B.B.C., 33, 45, 84  
     Commentaries, 99-102  
     Policy, 93-4  
     Staff associations, 87  
 Baldwin, Stanley, 157, 222  
 Banting, 251  
 Barker, Harley Granville,  
     53, 68  
 Barrie, Sir J. M., 55  
 Bates, Ralph, 118  
 Bedding, theatre as prelude  
     to, 48  
 Beerbohm, Max, 170  
 Beethoven, 69, 85  
 Belloc, H., 109  
 Belly-slavery, 38  
 Bennett, Arnold, 110  
  
 Berlin, Irving, 85  
 Bernhardt, Sarah, 71  
 Birkenhead, 226-30  
 Birth Control, 257  
*Birth of a Nation*, 71  
 Blimp, Col., 11, 240  
 Bloemfontein, 48  
 Blood-sports, 95  
 Blum, Léon, 222  
 Blunt, Bishop of Bradford,  
     132  
 Blunt, Wilfrid Scawen, 210  
 Boston, Mass, 145  
 Brailsford, H. N., 173  
 Brasshats, 161  
*Bride for the Unicorn, A*, 59  
 Brieux, 106  
 Brighton Pier, 48  
 British Empire, 163-4, 210  
 British Phlegm, 130  
 Broadcasting House, 88  
 Brooke, Rupert, 151  
 Brown, Ernest, 40  
 Budget Leakage, 130  
 Buffalo Bill, life of 71  
 Butler, Samuel, 51  
  
 CAILLAUX, JOSEPH, 220-1  
 Caldwell, Erskine, 118  
 Cambon, Jules, 217  
 Cantwell, Robert, 118  
*Cap Pilar*, 63  
 Cape of Good Hope, triang-  
     ular, 85  
 Capitalism and insecurity,  
     200

# THE CHANGING SCENE

- Carnock, Lord, 216 *et seq.*  
 Cat and Mouse Act, 175  
 Celtic Immersion, 55  
 Chaplin, Charles, 74-5  
 Chekhov, Anton, 59, 106  
 Chesterton, G. K., 109  
 Christ, shot at 40  
     Quoted 256.  
*Chrome Yellow*, 114  
 Churchill, Winston, 53  
 Cicero, 155-6.  
 Clair, René, 81  
 Classics, 155-9.  
 Coast, desecration of, 207  
 Cocks, Gerald, 102  
 Colonies, 209  
 Condemned Houses, 259  
 Congo, 219  
 Conrad, 107, 110  
 Contracts, 91  
 Controversial Subjects, 95  
 Cooper, Mr. A. Duff-, 162*n*,  
     247  
 Corn Laws, Repeal of, 201  
 Coward, Noel, 114  
 Crane, Stephen, 110  
 Cricket, 151-2  
 Crippen, Dr., 83  
*Critical Attitude, The*, 108  
 Croix de Feu, 41  
 Cruppi, 216  
 Culture, pre-war, 216  
 Cummings, A. J., 125  
  
*Daily Express*, 124  
*Daily Herald*, 124-5  
*Daily Mail*, 124  
*Daily Mirror*, 124  
*Daily News*, 35  
*Daily Sketch*, 124  
*Daily Worker*, 19, 44, 124,  
     125, 260, 263  
  
*Dame aux Camélias*, 71  
*Dance of Death*, 65  
 Davidson, Emily Wilding,  
     176  
 Democracy, 15  
 Demonstrations, 21  
 Depressed Areas, 21  
 Deverell, Field-Marshal | Sir  
     Cyril, 162*n*  
 Dietary, 256-2  
*Dog beneath the Skin, The*, 60-1  
 Dole, 232  
 Dos Passos, 118  
*Drifters*, 36-7  
 Drummond, "General," 170  
 Dublin Gate Theatre, 49  
 Dunsany, Lord, *Cheeso*, 30*n*  
 Dutt, R. Palme, *World Poli-*  
     *tics*, 1918-36, 213  
  
 EDEN, ANTONY, 222  
 Education, 143-64  
 Edward VII, 261  
 Egypt, 11  
 Eliot, T. S., 65, 113  
*Empire News*, 123  
*English Review*, 212  
 Entertainment, 47  
 Eton, 157  
  
 FABIANISM, 167  
 Faith in Reason, 51  
 Fawcett, Dame Millicent,  
     168-9  
 Fetichism as a Virtue, 84  
 Flaherty, Robert, 56  
 Flaubert, 16  
 Forcible feeding, 172  
 Ford, Ford Madox, 105, 108,  
     110  
 Ford, Henry, 46

# INDEX

- Fox, R. M., *Smoky Crusade*, 238
- Franco, Gen., 193
- Frank, Waldo, 118
- Freud, 109
- Futurity, 113
- GABRIEL, ARCHANGEL, 52
- Gallacher, W., *Revolt on the Clyde*, 172
- Galsworthy, John, 53-5, 107
- Garvice, Charles, 105*n*
- Gas, Light and Coke Co., 36
- George, Lloyd, 157, 170, 173, 218-19
- George V, 174, 262
- George VI, 263
- Georgian Verse*, 16
- Gerhardi, William, 114
- Germany, 221
- Gibraltar, 214-15
- Gide, André, 118
- Gladstone, Herbert, 170
- Gooseberry bushes, 105
- Goschen, Sir Edward, 221
- Gould, Gerald, 108
- G.P.O. Film Unit, 36
- Grammar Schools, 159
- Graziani, General, 212*n*
- Great Bank Robbery*, 69-70
- Great Train Robbery*, 70
- Great War, 22
- Gregg, Richard, *The Power of Non-Violence*, 192
- Gregory, Lady, 55
- Greiser, snook-cocker, 221
- Grey of Fallodon, Viscount, 12, 141, 219, 222
- Griffith, D. W., 71
- Gropius, Walter, 257
- Group Theatre, 49, 65
- Gunther, John, 141
- HAIG, FLORENCE, 173
- Halper, Albert, 118
- Halward, Leslie, 118
- Hankin, St. J., 55
- Hannington, Wal, *Unemployed Struggles*, 224 *et seq.*
- Harben, Henry, 173
- Hardy, Thomas, 16, 107
- Harrisson, T. H., *Savage Civilisation*, 212*n*
- Harrow, 157
- Have and Have-not Powers, 213
- Health Insurance, 203
- Herbst, Josephine, 118
- Hire purchase, 206, 255
- Hitler, 193, 221-2  
*Mein Kampf*, 214
- Hoare-Laval Plan, 13
- Hobbies, 84
- Hobson, O. R., 244
- Hollow Men, The*, 113
- Hollywood, 78
- Housing, 257
- Housman, Laurence, 173
- Human Nature, mutable, 19
- Hunger-striking, 172 *et seq.*
- Huxley, Aldous, 114
- IBSEN, 16, 51, 106, 169
- Ideological War, 166
- Income, national, 244
- India, 11, 193
- Inskip, Sir Thomas, 248
- International Class War Prisoners' Aid, Report on Birkenhead Terror, 228-30
- Ireland, 9

# THE CHANGING SCENE

Irish Theatre, 55  
Isherwood, C., 60-5, 118

JACOB'S LADDER, 92  
James, Henry, 107  
Jameson, Storm, 118  
Jerry-building, 205-7  
Jersey, Dowager Countess of,  
170

Johnston, Denis, 59-61, 64  
Jones, Henry Arthur, 55  
Joyce, James, 108  
Jung, 109  
*Juno and the Paycock*, 56  
*Justice*, 53

*Kameradschaft*, 45  
Keats, 106, 151  
Keystone Comedies, 73  
Kháparde, 211  
Korda, Alexander, 80-1

*Labour Monthly*, 45  
Labour Movement, 9  
Lamb, Charles, 106  
Langtry, Lily, 79  
Laval, 222  
Lawrence, D. H., 16, 18, 106,  
108, 114, 186  
L.C.C. Elections, 200  
League of Nations, 213, 221  
Lees Smith, M.P., 90, 93  
Left Book Club, 45, 118  
*Left Review*, 45  
Left Theatre, 49, 65  
Lehmann, Rosamond, 114  
Lenin, V. I., 52  
Lewis, Wyndham, 115  
Libel Laws, 125 *et seq.*  
Liberty of Speech, 45-6  
Life Spirit, 51

Linklater, E., *Men of Ness*,  
*Listener*, 33, 86  
*Living China*, 118  
Llano, Gen. Queipo de, 221  
Lloyd, Lord, 248  
Lord Mayor of London, 161  
Lovell, Bob, 228  
*Loyalties*, 53  
*Lynching at Cripple Creek*, 69  
Lytton, Lady Constance, 173

MACARTNEY, W. R. F.,  
*Walls have Mouths*, 172  
Mackenzie, Compton, 109  
MacNeice, Louis, 65  
McGree, Leo, 230  
*Madras House, The*, 53  
Malaga, 194  
Malnutrition, 14-15, 244-7  
Malraux, André, 118  
*Man of Aran*, 56  
Marbel Arch, 58  
*March of Time, The*, 40  
Marconi Scandal, 130  
Marinetti, 106  
Marx Brothers, 75-7  
Maugham, Somerset, 108  
Means Test, 157, 231-9  
Meat Extracts, 33  
*Men of Good Will*, 111  
Metternich, Count, 216 *et seq.*  
Meynel, Francis, 173  
*Mills of Doom*, 43  
Milne, Lord, 161  
Mitchell, Sir Peter Chalmers,  
194  
Mitchison, Naomi, 118  
Mix, Tom, 72  
*Modern Times*, 74  
Monro, Harold, 108  
*Moon on the Yellow River, The*,  
59

# INDEX

Moore, George, 55  
 Morgan, Pierpoint, 146  
 Morley, Secretary of India,  
     11  
 Morris-dancing, 48  
 Mosley, Sir Oswald, 261  
*Mr. Deeds Comes to Town*, 42  
*Mr. Kipps*, 109  
*Mrs. Warren's Profession*, 176  
 Mussolini, 222

NATIONAL HEALTH INSUR-  
 ANCE, 11, 203  
 National Theatre, 49  
 National Unemployed  
     Workers' Movement,  
     225 *et seq.*, 239  
 National Union for Women's  
     Suffrage, 168  
 Nevins, H. W., 173  
*New Statesman and Nation*,  
     45, 101, 130  
*New Verse*, 17-18  
*New Writing*, 118  
*News Chronicle*, 63, 87, 132,  
     260  
 News Films, 39  
*News of the World*, 139  
 Newspaper Groups, 136-9  
 Nichols, Beverley, 114  
 Nicolson, H., *Lord Carnock*,  
     216 *et seq.*  
 Nonviolence, 165, 192  
 Northcliffe, Lord, 69, 180  
 Nuffield, Lord, 39, 239, 248

•

O'CASEY, SEAN, 56-9, 61, 64  
 O'Henry Memorial Prize, 92  
 Odets, Clifford, 52  
 Of Human Bondage, 109  
 Old Age Pensions, 203

*Old English*, 107  
*Old Lady says No, The*, 59  
*Old Wives' Tale*, 109  
 Olympic Games, 189  
 Oppenheim, E. Phillips, 90  
 Optimism, 16  
 Organic View of Life, 165-7  
 Orr Report, 244-7  
 Orwell, George, 118, 233,  
     235-6, 251-4, 258-9  
 Overcrowding, 257  
 Ovid, 156

PABST, G. W., 45  
 Pacifism, 95, 164  
 Pankhursts, 168  
 Pankhurst, Christabel, 169-  
     71, 176  
 Pankhurst, Mrs., 170, 174-6  
 Parliament Act, 9  
 Passive Resistance, 170  
 Pater, Walter, 106  
 Patiala, Maharajah of, 248  
*People, The*, 123  
 Pellagra, 88  
 Pethick Lawrences, 168, 177  
 Philately, 84, 85  
 Physical Training, 248  
 Pickford, Mary, 70  
 Pine, "Lady," 175  
 Pinero, Sir Arthur, 55  
 Pitcairn, Frank, 125  
 Plato, 151  
*Playboy of the Western World*,  
     *The*, 55  
*Plays Unpleasant*, 170  
*Plough and the Stars, The*, 56  
 Plutocracy, 145  
 Poetry Review, 109  
 Political, change in word's  
     meaning, 113n

# THE CHANGING SCENE

- Polyphiloprogenesis among
  - Fascist powers, 214
- Population drift, 205
- Porson, 154
- Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 109
- "Pragger Wagger" ballyhoo, 262
- Prejudice, sanctity of, 94
- Pre-Raphaelites, 55
- Primate, equated with Stainless Stephen, 85
  - his mistimed religious revival, 135
  - relations with Duke of Windsor, 132
- Proletarian novel, contrasted with bourgeois, 115-17
- Proletarian romanticism, 240
- Propaganda, 28-40
- Protectorates, 213
- Public Assistance Committee, rates of, 232
- Pygmalion*, 56
- Pym, Mr., 87
  
- RADIO-BIBBING, 85
- Radio Times*, 33, 86
- Rawlings, Joe, 230
- Rebel Players, 66
- Recruiting, 222
- Reform Bill, 173
- Reith, Sir John, 91
- Relativity of Sportsmanship, 130
- Rhondda, Viscountess, 174, 177-8
- Holland, Romain, 118
- Romains, Jules, 111, 118
- Rotha, Paul, 37-8
- Rothermere, Lord, 180
- Russia, 23
  
- Saturday Review*, 170
- Savarkar, 210-11
- Scaliger, 154
- Schneider-Creusot, 41.
- Schoolmasters in Politics, 149<sup>n</sup>
- Scrap Iron, 223
- Sea-routes, imperial, 214
- Seldes, George, 73
- Seligman, André, 63
- Shadow of the Gunman*, 56
- Shakespeare, 106
- Shape of Things to Come*, 52-3
- Shaw, G. B., 49-52, 55, 60, 106
- Shelley, P. B., 106
- Sheppard, Rev. R., 19
- Silicosis, 88
- Silone, Ignazio, 57
- Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles, The*, 52
- Simpson, Mrs. E., 131
- Singing Fool, The*, 70
- Sinister Street*, 109
- Skin Game*, 53
- Slater, Montagu, 66
- Sloganismus, 115
- Smyth, Dame Ethyl, 175
- Snobbery, 144-5
- Soames, Jane, *The English Press*, 125 *et seq.*
- Sommerfield, John, 118
- Sons and Lovers*, 109
- Sophocles, 154
- South Eastern Railway, 220
- Spain, 24, 190, 221
- Special Areas Bill, 264
- Speculative Lawyers, 128<sup>n</sup>
- Spender, Stephen, *Forward from Liberalism*, 35
- Stay Down Miner*, 66
- Storm Song*, 59



# INDEX

- Strachey, John, *Theory and Practise of Socialism*, 203 *et seq.*
- Strachey, Mrs. Ray, *The Cause*, 171
- Strauss, G. R., 260
- Success Stories, 146
- Suffragettes, 168 *et seq.*
- Sweeney Agonistes, 65
- Swingler, Randall, 67, 180
- Synge, J. M., 55
- TALLYMEN, 256
- Television, 102-4
- Temple, Shirley, 70
- Ten Hours Bill, 201
- Thackeray, W. M., *Book of Snobs*, 144
- Thomas, Mrs. D. A., 173
- Thucydides, 156
- Times, The*, 123
- Titanic*, 83
- Town-planning, 201
- Trade Union Movement, 196
- Trapped by Bloodhounds*, 196
- Tressall, *Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, 115
- Triple Entente, 219, 221
- Tryon, Major, 98
- "Tweenies," 160
- UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE BOARD, 232
- Unemployment Insurance, 203
- Unemployment Statistics, 224
- Unity Theatre Club, 51, 53<sup>n</sup>, 65-8
- U.S.A., 145
- U.S.S.R., 188, 221
- Utopias, 51
- VELASQUEZ's PHILIP IV, 130
- Voysey Inheritance*, 53
- WAGGA-WAGGA, 48
- Waiting for Lefty*, 52, 66-7
- Wakefield, Viscount, 248
- Warcry*, 19
- Ward, Arnold, M.P., 170
- Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 170
- Waterloo, Battle of, 157
- Weather Reports, 84
- Wells, H. G., 51, 107, 111-13, 151
- West-end Theatre, 47-8
- Westerns, 72
- Where's that Bomb?* 67
- Wilde, O., *Fairy Stories*, 117
- Windsor, Duke of, 131, 262
- Winterton, Earl, 10
- Within the Gates*, 56-9
- Women's Suffrage, 9, 167-79
- Womersley, Sir Walter, 87, 90
- Wood, Sir Kingsley, 40
- Word-magic, 31
- Wyndham, George, 10
- YEATS, W. B., 55
- Yorkshire Post*, 132, 263
- ZUKOR, ADOLPH, 71

